THE EVERGETINOS

A Complete Text

CENTER FOR TRADITIONALIST
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THE EVERGETINOS

«Τίς φθονερώτερος τοῦ κεκτημένου βιβλίον ὠφέλιμον, καὶ μὴ μεταδιδόντος τῷ ἀδελφῷ πρὸς οἰκοδομήν;»

τοῦ Ἁγίου Ἐφραίμ

THE EVERGETINOS

A COMPLETE TEXT
Book I

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CENTER FOR TRADITIONALIST ORTHODOX STUDIES
2008

Note: All Psalms and other Old Testamental and Deutero-Canonical citations in the four books of *The Evergetinos* are according to the *Septuaginta* (LXX) and its numbering system. Designations of Scriptural quotations by chapter and verse in the original Greek text are set off in parentheses. When quotations do not include such designations, but are provided by the translators, they are set off in brackets.

Book I

ISBN 978-0-911165-7-15 (hardcover)
ISBN 978-0-911165-7-53 (paperback)

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Complete Set

ISBN 978-0-911165-7-91 (hardcover)
ISBN 978-0-911165-8-07 (paperback)

Library of Congress Control Number
2008932586

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Acknowledgements

The Editors would like to acknowledge several individuals whose suggestions, advice, and direct aid made the publication of this work possible: the late Reverend Dr. N. Michael Vaporis, former Dean of the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Dr. Constantine Cavarnos, President of the Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, and the late Reverend Dr. Henri Nouwen, former Professor of Divinity at the Harvard Divinity School. For their technical support and arduous labor in preparing and formatting the publication, we owe a note of special gratitude to Hieromonk Father Gregory and Monk Vlasie, brothers of the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery in Etna, California. We are likewise indebted to Presbytera Juliana Cownie, Presbytera Mary Zubricky, and the sisterhood of the Convent of St. Elizabeth the Grand Duchess of Russia, in Etna, California, for their indefatigable work in proofreading the text.

Dedication

For Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle,
our ever-present guide in the desert and
our intercessory Abba in the City.

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«Ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν Θεόν, ἀγγελικὸν βίον βιοῖ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς νηστεύων καὶ ἀγρυπνῶν, καὶ ψάλλων καὶ προσευχόμενος, καὶ περὶ παντὸς ἀνθρώπου ἀεὶ καλὰ λογιζόμενος».

τοῦ Ἁγίου Μαξίμου

Table of Contents

Book One

Introduction
by Archbishop Chrysostomos xix
Preface
by Hieromonk Gorazd xxvii
Prologue (Προοίμιον)
by St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite xxxi

Hypothesis I 1
No one should despair ever, even if he has committed many sins, but should have hope that, through repentance, he shall be saved.
Hypothesis II 28
As long as we are in the present life, we must do good here and not delay until the future. For after death we cannot set things aright.
Hypothesis III 30
Concerning how we should repent.
Hypothesis IV 35
That the afflicted should be guided slowly in the works of repentance.
Hypothesis V 37
That we must always call to mind death and the future judgment; for he who does not continually expect death and the future judgment is easily overcome by the passions.
Hypothesis VI 47
The joy of Heaven is inexpressible, as is the glory which awaits the Saints; therefore, we must remember with our whole souls the joy of Heaven and the glory of the Saints. In all that we accomplish, nothing is equal to that joy and glory.
Hypothesis VII 53
Many times the souls of virtuous people are made cheerful at the time of death by some Divine overshadowing, and thus they depart from the body.
Hypothesis VIII 64
Regarding those who die and come to life again, and how this hap-

pens by Divine Providence. And how many times sinners while still alive, beholding the torments of Hell and the demons, shudder with fear; and in this state of fear, their souls depart the body.

Hypothesis IX 74

Proof of where the souls of the dying go and how they exist after their separation from the body.

Hypothesis X 85

The soul, after its departure from the body, undergoes testing in the air by evil spirits which encounter it and attempt to impede its ascent.

Hypothesis XI 90

How, after death, souls are assigned to the same place as those souls which lived in a similar way on earth.

Hypothesis XII 95

God-loving parents should rejoice and be thankful for the trials and temptations that their children endure for the sake of the Lord. As well, parents who love God should exhort their children to struggle and to risk all for the sake of virtue.

Hypothesis XIII 106

How one renouncing the world should go to a remote place; what constitutes a remote place and what benefit derives from it; and what places are most appropriate for living out the ascetic life.

Hypothesis XIV 115

From whence the fear and love of God are first engendered in man and to what extent he is obliged to fear and love God.

Hypothesis XV 116

It is essential for those who have abandoned the world not to communicate with their relatives according to the flesh or to nurture the slightest interest in them.

Hypothesis XVI 126

We must love our relatives in the flesh equally with our other brothers, as long as our relatives lead a similar kind of life; if, however, they conduct themselves in a way discordant with that of our brothers, we must avoid them as harmful.

Hypothesis XVII 130

How he who becomes a monk must bare himself of all things, and how he must dispose of everything which belongs to him. That the existence of personal property for a monk in a cœnobitic monastery is clearly disastrous.

Hypothesis XVIII 134

It is necessary for one who wishes to be saved to seek the company

of virtuous people and, as a thing much beneficial, to question them with exceeding desire and flaming zeal, so as to learn from them all those things which are essential for the salvation of the soul.

Hypothesis XIX 142

Regarding the necessity of obedience: what benefits arise from it and how a man accomplishes it.

Hypothesis XX 150

That one should not trust in himself in anything, but should heed the advice of the Fathers in all things and should clearly confess the secrets of his heart without hiding anything.

Hypothesis XXI 169

That we must confess our thoughts to those among the Fathers who are discerning and not entrust them to just anyone; how we are to confess and what we should ask our confessors; what faith we should place in the answers of the Fathers; and how, through this faith, we should work together with our confessors for the achievement of good.

Hypothesis XXII 186

Concerning the fact that he who wishes to be saved must avoid meetings with careless men and must avoid disturbances, and that estrangement from worldly affairs is necessary for him.

Hypothesis XXIII 196

Concerning the fact that we must keep away from those who harm us, even if they are friends or are otherwise quite indispensable.

Hypothesis XXIV 199

Concerning the fact that one who has renounced the world should not be entangled at all with earthly affairs, even if they seem justified, but should submit to Divine Providence in these matters also.

Hypothesis XXV 207

Concerning the fact that evil is easy, and that there are many who choose this, especially in our day; that virtue is demanding, and that there are few who pursue it; and that we must emulate the latter and pay no heed to the majority.

Hypothesis XXVI 213

Those coming to the monastic life are received with much testing; those admitted after scrutiny are for the most part reliable; what tasks are entrusted to them.

Hypothesis XXVII 229

Rejections of the world based on different circumstances should

not be wholly turned aside; we should not immediately dismiss someone who comes to the monastic community and fervently seeks to remain with the brethren, before we have examined him in detail; rather, we should grant him some possibility of staying and test him in accordance with what we have written. After we have ascertained that he is abiding by his intention, and after testing him, we should accept him into the monastic community, unless something happens that is forbidden by the Divine laws.

Hypothesis XXVIII 235

From what point we should begin a life of asceticism; all who start need patience and need to put pressure on themselves, since virtue appears difficult at the beginning, on account of one's passions and prejudices; but later on it proves to be much easier to acquire; a strong foundation at the beginning is very beneficial; it is impossible to follow Christ or to gain any virtue at all if one does not prepare himself as though his death were imminent.

Hypothesis XXIX 246

The demons wage a furious war against him who struggles with all his strength, whereas they are uninterested in the negligent, since they have them at their beck and call; those who want the good find God to be their ally, Who permits wars for our spiritual profit.

Hypothesis XXX 255

We should not regard the demons as causes of all the sins we commit, but rather ourselves; for the demons are unable to harm those who are attentive, since the help that comes from God is great; and that God allows struggles in proportion to the strength of men.

Hypothesis XXXI 261

One who has come to the ascetical life should only be clothed in monastic garb after he has been sufficiently trained in the virtues; the monastic *schema* is honorable, soul-profiting, and salvific.

Hypothesis XXXII 267

The faithful monk should display a manner of life that is appropriate to his *schema*; for he who does not live in conformity with his *schema* is not faithful; likewise, a Godly old age is not characterized by length of time, but by the way in which a man lives.

Hypothesis XXXIII 281

The faithful monk should eagerly accept whatever his spiritual Father suggests to him, because all such suggestions are in his interest, even if they induce distress or are arduous; for mercy is given by God for this purpose and for the alleviation of afflictions.

Hypothesis XXXIV 296
We should be obedient to our superiors in the Lord, even unto death, and love and fear them.
Hypothesis XXXV 301
We should be subject in simplicity to our superiors in the Lord and accept their orders as coming from God, without criticizing, examining, or correcting them, even if they do not seem for the time being to be of benefit.
Hypothesis XXXVI 309
What the sins of disobedience and grumbling against our teachers in the Lord are; the Christian should not object at all or justify himself, but should in all cases resist his own will and love reproof, not avoid it.
Hypothesis XXXVII 311
One should not condemn his teacher, even if his teacher does some things at variance with what he teaches; for many disciples have entrusted themselves to negligent teachers and, not having condemned them, but remaining subject to them in the Lord, have saved themselves and have become the cause of their teachers' salvation.
Hypothesis XXXVIII 316
How the Grace of God often teaches those who watch over themselves and entrust themselves to His Providence what they ought to do through simple people and strangers; the humble do not refuse to learn from anyone they may encounter.
Hypothesis XXXIX 322
The faithful Christian should not be confident in himself, but should believe that through his spiritual Father he is both saved and enabled to do everything good; and he should invoke the prayers of his Elder, for they have great power.
Hypothesis XL 333
That one should not lightly go out of, or withdraw from, the monastery in which he has promised, in the sight of God, to remain until the end of his life; for the Fathers did not even go out of their cells, in which they found great benefit.
Hypothesis XLI 356
That for those who are not prepared, it is perilous to live alone.
Hypothesis XLII 367
That we should not gainsay anyone in a contentious manner even regarding those things that are considered good, but should be subject to our neighbor in everything.

Hypothesis XLIII 376
That whatever happens, happens by the justice of God; for this reason the believer must always follow Divine Providence and must seek, not his own will, but the Will of God; for he who does or accepts all things in this manner has spiritual rest.
Hypothesis XLIV 379
That humility is completely impregnable to demons, how humility is engendered, and what its power is; that humility, more than all the other virtues, is able, by itself, to save a man.
Hypothesis XLV 386
A distinctive mark of the humble man is that he blames and disparages himself and thinks that his good deeds, howsoever many and whatsoever they may be, amount to nothing; what the characteristic traits of humility are, and what are its fruits.
Hypothesis XLVI 409
Concerning what profit there is in reproaching ourselves.
Hypothesis XLVII 412
That we should not seek honor or desire privileges; for whatever men reckon to be honorable is an abomination to God.
Hypothesis XLVIII 414
That to appear humble, when this is done inopportunely or excessively, is not beneficial, but harmful; how we ought to act towards those who praise us, and that praise does no harm at all to one who is attentive.
Hypothesis XLIX 416
Concerning how one should use clothing, what kind, and up to what point, in order to cover the body, and how the Fathers loved frugality in their very dress; the faithful should prefer frugality in every circumstance.
Hypothesis L 419
That we should not do anything to gratify ourselves or do anything out of a passionate craving.

Glossary of General Terms in Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Christianity 422
Index of Selected Names in Book I 427
Index of Selected Subjects in Book I 431

Introduction

By Archbishop Chrysostomos
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It was exactly twenty years ago, in 1988, that the first of fourteen constituent volumes of this first complete English text, in four books, of the standard Orthodox collection of the sayings and teachings of the desert Fathers and monastic theologians, *The Evergetinos*, appeared.[1] At the suggestion and with the encouragement of a number of Orthodox scholars from various jurisdictions, I began that volume in 1985, while a Visiting Scholar at Pembroke College, Oxford University, where, at the invitation of Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia, former Spalding Lecturer in Eastern Orthodox Studies at Oxford, I was conducting research with a grant from the Marsden Foundation. It was during this time that I met Professor John V. Petropoulos, then an Onassis Fellow and doctoral candidate at Lincoln College, Oxford, who was my first co-worker on the project. I was later joined by a number of other scholars, who contributed to my ongoing translation work on an occasional basis, making it a truly coöperative endeavor. Their names are found among those cited on the title page of each of the four books of the complete text of *The Evergetinos*. From 1998 and on, I also shared the editorial aspects of the project, as well as the bulk of the translating, with Hieromonk Patapios, both of us superbly aided by these skilled co-workers.

I should point out some technical particulars about our translation of *The Evergetinos*. First, we have rendered the Greek word "*εὐεργετινός*" as "*evergetinos*," using the standard modern transliteration of the diphthong "*ευ*"—"ev"—rather than the classical "eu," a convention justified by the fact that when *The Evergetinos* first appeared in printed form, there is no doubt that its title was pronounced by educated Greeks as we have indicated—phonetically, ĕĕv-ĕr-yĕ-tē-nōs´—and not as the artificial Erasmian pronunciation would have it (phonetically, eu-[as in "*feud*"]-ĕr-gĕ-ti["i" as in "it"]-nos´["o" as in "off"]). We have otherwise employed in the text the classical form of transliteration for Greek words, except for place names and common cognomina that are better known in their mo-

dern transliterated forms. Second, in transliterating praenomina of Greek origin and without English counterparts, we have used—unless cited in a specifically non-Greek context—their proper Greek endings (for example, "Euthymi*os*" for "Εὐθύμι*ος*") rather than their imprecise Latinization (in this instance, "Euthymi*us*"). At times, we have also rendered certain diphthongs in such names according to modern Greek pronunciation (in the instance cited, "*Ev*thymios," instead of "*Eu*thymios"), though avoiding the various rather labored forms of modern Greek transliteration ("Efthymios," "Efthimios," etc.). Third, we have for the greater part taken Biblical passages in *The Evergetinos* from the Scriptural translations published by the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, conforming to the texts used in the Eastern Orthodox Church: *The Gospel Lectionary* (Etna, CA: 2005), *The Epistle Lectionary* (Etna, CA: 2004), and *The Psalter* (Etna, CA: 2008). Psalms and other Old Testamental and Deutero-Canonical citations are according to the *Septuaginta* (LXX) and its numbering system (*vide supra*, p. iv) and have been rendered in the language of the King James Version, with adjustments to the original Greek.

Concerning the first printed text of *The Evergetinos*, it was published in 1783 by St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite (†1809), the great theologian, hagiologist, and Hesychast of Mt. Athos, at the Greek-language press of the publishing house of Antonio Bortoli in Venice, under the patronage of a wealthy Greek from Smyrna, a certain John Kannas. The full title of the work was *Συναγωγὴ τῶν Θεοφθόγγων Ῥημάτων καὶ Διδασκαλιῶν τῶν Θεοφόρων καὶ Ἁγίων Πατέρων: Ἀπὸ πάσης Γραφῆς Θεοπνεύστου Συναθροισθεῖσα Οἰκείως τε καὶ Προσφόρως Ἐκτεθεῖσα παρὰ Παύλου τοῦ Ὁσιωτάτου Μοναχοῦ καὶ Κτήτορος Μονῆς τῆς Ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου Εὐεργέτιδος καὶ Εὐεργετινοῦ Ἐπικαλουμένου* (Collection of the Divinely-uttered words and teachings of the God-Bearing and Holy Fathers: Assembled from the entirety of Divinely-inspired literature aptly and conveniently arranged by Paul, the most venerable monk and founder of the Monastery of the Most Holy *Theotokos* the Benefactress and known as *Evergetinos*). St. Nikodemos worked from a hand-written prototype of *The Evergetinos*, given to him by his famed collaborator and friend, St. Makarios of Corinth (†1805), which the latter had copied and compiled from a manuscript ("or manuscripts," as Stylianos Papadopoulos, Professor in the School of Theology at the University of Athens, conjectures[2]) found at the Koutloumousiou Monastery on Mt. Athos. (Despite widespread claims to the contrary, the Koutloumousiou collection was but one source among many of the extant manuscripts of the collection—more than sixty, according to some

authorities.) According to Hieromonk Evthymios' life of the Saint, written between 1812 and 1813, Nikodemos corrected and added a preface to *The Evergetinos* as it was given to him by St. Makarios.[3]

As the title assigned by St. Makarios and St. Nikodemos to the first edition indicates, the writings in *The Evergetinos* were originally collected and arranged by the rather obscure Monk Paul (†1054), founder of the Μονὴ τῆς Εὐεργέτιδος (*Mone tes Evergetidos*, or the Monastery of the Benefactress) in Constantinople; hence, his sobriquet, "Παῦλος Εὐεργετινός," or "Paul Evergetinos," after the monastery which he founded, and thus the name given to his work. Father Paul took much of the material for *The Evergetinos* from the *Ἀποφθέγματα* (*Apophthegmata*), or the several Greek collections of the aphorisms of the monks of the Egyptian desert. (There are also collections in a number of other ancient languages, including Armenian, Coptic, Ge'ez [Ethiopic], Latin, and Syriac.) Most of these materials date back to the fourth or fifth century. They are arranged alphabetically by the topics that they cover or by the names of the persons to whom sayings are attributed or about whom stories are related. Alternatively, they are organized non-alphabetically by topic and theme; that is, they are gathered in an alphabetic collection, the "*ἀλφαβητικὴ παραλλαγή*" (in Latin, the *Alphabeticum* of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*) or in a systematic collection, the "*συστηματικὴ παραλλαγή*." Father Paul combined the alphabetic and systematic collections and arranged them thematically in various chapters, or "hypotheses" (*vide infra*), aimed at addressing the practical, devotional, and higher spiritual aspects of religious life, and monastic life in particular.

Many of the popular modern translations of the desert Fathers in the West are taken largely from Latin sources, which differ in both significant and insignificant ways from the Greek (and other Eastern) texts of the *Apophthegmata* and which, of course, lack the thematic arrangement of *The Evergetinos*. By contrast, the vast majority of contemporary Greek-speaking Orthodox believers have received the wisdom of the desert directly from Eastern sources, and *primarily* from *The Evergetinos*. This is also true of the Slavic Orthodox world, which came to know *The Evergetinos* through a Russian translation of the text, in the late nineteenth century, by the Athonite Elder Theodosios of Karoulia. In addition, the Hesychastic traditions peculiar to the Orthodox Christian East—about which I will say more subsequently—not only lay at the core of early Egyptian monasticism, but *The Evergetinos* is configured in such a manner as to illustrate and elucidate these traditions through the prism of the

spiritual lives and experiences of the desert Fathers. This does not diminish or trivialize the impact of the desert Fathers on Western Christianity, but it does focus attention on a profound intimacy between the ancient desert and traditional Orthodox spirituality that, as the late Father Henri Nouwen put it, the West often "only vaguely senses." This intimacy is, once more, clearly captured in Father Paul's very *deliberate* and *specific* arrangement and configuration of the texts contained in his collection.

Our English text of *The Evergetinos* has used as its prototype the four books of the sixth edition of the Greek text, which has been variously reprinted over the ensuing years. This work was published by the Monastery of the Transfiguration (a monastic institution of the so-called Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Greece, comprised of various Synods of Bishops that still follow the traditional Festal Calendar of the Orthodox Church) in Athens (Kouvara, Attica), Greece, in 1977. Edited by Archimandrite Matthew, it is essentially the same as what is styled as the fifth edition of *The Evergetinos*, published by Matthew's predecessor, Abbot Victor, of the same monastery, between 1957 and 1966. However, the later (sixth) edition contains the original archaic Greek text of *The Evergetinos*, along with a modern Greek translation in so-called *ἁπλῆ καθαρεύουσα* (*haple kathareuousa*, or the simpler form of the Greek literary dialect). Both of these editions, like the second edition (published in Constantinople, in 1861, at the publishing house of K. and L. Phokaeus), the third (published in Athens, in 1900, by Demetrios Takos), and the fourth (published in Athens, in 1901, by Antonios Georgiou), are based on St. Nikodemos' first edition of *The Evergetinos.* The sixth edition contains the explanatory notes of the Saint and joins to them the annotations and the marginal commentaries that Abbot Victor appended to his fifth edition. We have, for the greater part, retained these notes, except for those additions by the editors of the sixth edition that seemed superfluous or repetitive, according to the individual judgment of the respective translators.

Though the modern Greek interpretation (or "free translation") of the text that we have followed at times augments the original text to the point of prolixity and is adulterated by a number of grammatical and spelling errors, as well as elaborations that sometimes go far beyond the boundaries of literary license, it is nonetheless reasonably faithful—with a few egregious exceptions—to the archaic prototype. More importantly, this is the text by way of which most modern Greek readers have come to know the piety of the desert Fathers; and, indeed, it is their experience which we would like to convey to English speakers through the present

translation. In 1991, a group of Byzantine scholars at the Queen's University of Belfast, in Northern Ireland, initiated the "*Evergetis* Project," proposing to produce a critical text in English of *The Evergetinos.*[4] To that end, having heard of our translation project, they contacted us regarding possible collaboration with their scholarly team. In the course of several exchanges, it became clear that our two endeavors were quite different and that our aim was to produce what the "*Evergetis* Project" scholars dubbed a "devotional text" and nothing even like a critical text. In the end, their critical text did not come to fruition; however, the legacy of our proposed joint effort manqué was that it provided us with a perfect description of what our project intention has always been: *viz.*, to produce a "devotional" translation of *The Evergetinos.* This is *precisely* what we hope to have accomplished with this publication.

Finally, in translating Archimandrite Matthew's 1977 edition, the translators were given the liberty of working with both the *archaic* and the *modern Greek* texts, emending the latter with reference to the former, when necessary, and embellishing the sometimes laconic style and ironic language of the older Greek text with elaborations provided in the modern Greek rendering. In this process, we may have further muddied the murky waters into which one wades when translating from two sources. If so, this has been an inadvertent transgression and one for which Hieromonk Patapios and I, as the principal editors of this work, are wholly responsible. Had I known, twenty years ago, that *The Evergetinos* would appear in a close and very readable modern Greek translation of the archaic text (in a reasonably literate form of *δημοτική* [*demotike*], or the common Greek dialect) by the author Demetres Christaphakopoulos, I would most certainly have taken that text as a prototype for the present translation. To date, two books (volumes) of his translation—*Εὐεργετινός: Λόγοι καὶ Διδασκαλίες τῶν Ἁγίων Πατέρων* (*Evergetinos: Logoi kai Didaskalies ton Hagion Pateron*, or *Evergetinos: Sayings and Teachings of the Holy Fathers*)—have already appeared in print (2001 and 2003), under the imprint of Ἐκδόσεις «Τὸ Περιβόλι τῆς Παναγίας» (Ekdoseis "To Periboli tes Panagias," or "Garden of the All-Holy [Mother of God]" Publications) in Thessaloniki, and this edition of *The Evergetinos* will undoubtedly become the standard text for future generations of Orthodox Greeks.

With regard to the composition, the methodology and aim, and the content of *The Evergetinos*, let me observe that, while most encyclopedic citations of the work refer to it as the standard Greek—or, as I have described it, the *general Eastern Orthodox*—collection of the aphorisms and

lives of the Fathers of the Egyptian desert, this is perhaps not wholly accurate. It does bring together a prodigious amount of material on the desert Fathers, encompassing such sources for early monastic history as the *Lausiac History* of Bishop Palladios (†420?), and is wholly justifiably associated with the desert Fathers. However, it also contains selections from the lives of Saints and from the writings of Fathers who are not directly associated with the Egyptian desert. This fact helps to underscore the methodology and aim of the compiler of *The Evergetinos*, who did not intend merely to provide an extensive catalog of the sayings and teachings of the desert Fathers (though his collection contains much that is missing from other collections), but, as I will argue, to produce a spiritual manual concentrated on, but not limited to, the monastic "laboratory"—as Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia has so aptly called it—of the Egyptian desert.

As I have emphasized, in assembling his monastic manual, Father Paul Evergetinos methodically arranged materials to fit into two hundred ὑποθέσεις (*hypotheses*—subjects or themes, or, as I prefer to say, "hypotheses") about the πρᾶξις (*praxis*, or practice) and θεωρία (*theoria*, or theory) of spiritual life. Fifty of these hypotheses make up each of the four books of *The Evergetinos*. Very much like a programmed text, each book works towards addressing matters of correct faith (orthodoxy) and matters pertinent to the proper observation and practice of that faith (orthopraxy), taking the reader from basic matters of comportment and moral formation to experiences of the ineffable mysteries of communion with God through Grace, carefully concentrating on the teachings of the Church Fathers and the specific examples of the monks and nuns (the Abbas and Ammas, or Fathers and Mothers) of the Egyptian desert and other monastics. It is because of this didactic aim of Father Paul that I chose—over the philological objections of several very competent advisors—to treat each of his themes as an "hypothesis," since his methodological approach, advanced for its time, actually contains elements recognizable in contemporary experimental pedagogy.

It was not by accident that St. Makarios and St. Nikodemos, themselves monastics steeped in the Hesychastic traditions of Mt. Athos, were attracted to *The Evergetinos*.[5] It is a practical guide not only to monastic life, but also to the cleansing of the mind, the cure of the passions and proclivities towards sin, and the inner spiritual transformation that are prerequisites for the attainment of the goal of the Hesychast (in fact, the goal of all Christian life, or salvation as the Orthodox Church defines it):

The acquirement of virtue, enlightenment, mystical union with the Mind of Christ, and the restoration of the image of God within the fallen human being, to the end, in a person's ultimate ascent to Divine Love, of the attainment of "likeness unto God." In this process of divinization, or θέωσις (*theosis*), one comes into union, through ascetic struggle, with the Divine Energies (though without violating in any manner God's transcendent unknowability). The spiritual aspirant thereby achieves the fullness of human potential *here in this life* and, though not immune to them, is turned away from and disinclined towards sin and imperfection. It is this goal which *The Evergetinos* envisions and which its edifying aphorisms, instructions, and exemplars of human deification by Grace illustrate.

Let me conclude my brief remarks with a few warnings. If there are those who think that the teachings and personages found in *The Evergetinos* are fanciful, or that the spirituality that they represent does not exist today, let me assure such doubters that, though rare and difficult to find, there are desert Fathers (Abbas and Ammas) still to be found in the incommodious urban din of modern life. Not all who emulate the adepts of the desert have succeeded at enlightenment, even if they may think that they have; however, some have done so, even if *they* are likely found only among those who think and affirm that they have not. Some readers may also think that the ascetic life and the struggle for union with God are pursuits for monastics and not for lay people. This, too, is untrue. In fact, some of the more inspiring stories in *The Evergetinos* pertain to lay people who, living in the world, surpassed even some of the great desert Fathers in the attainment of spiritual gifts. Unless the reader rids himself of all of these misconceptions, our ultimate purpose in translating this monumental spiritual work, as well as the endless labors involved in serving that purpose, will have been in vain.

Etna, California
April 25, 2008 (Old Style)

Notes

1. I have also translated and published several volumes from this collection separately. These are: *The Ancient Fathers of the Desert* (Brookline, MA: Hellenic College Press, 1980); *The Ancient Fathers of the Desert: A Second Volume* (Brookline, MA: Hellenic College Press, 1986); and *Flowers from the Desert: Sayings on Humility, Obedience, Repentance, and Love from the Christian Hermits of Ancient Times* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2003), which appeared in a Romanian translation as *Flori din Deșert: Pilde Despre Smerenie, Ascultare, Pocăință și Iubire ale Sihaștrilor Creș-*

tini din Vechime, trans. Professor Remus Rus (Bucharest, Romania: Editura Vremea, 2003).

2. Stylianos G. Papadopoulos, *Ἅγιος Μακάριος Κορίνθου: ὁ Γενάρχης τοῦ Φιλοκαλισμοῦ* (St. Makarios of Corinth: the progenitor of *The Philokalia*) (Athens: Ekdoseis Akritas, 2000), p. 80.

3. Hieromonk Evthymios, *Ὁ Πρωτότυπος Βίος Ἁγίου Νικοδήμου Ἁγιορείτου (1749-1809)* (The original life of St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite [1749-1809]), ed. Monk Nikodemos (Bilales) (Athens: "Syllogos Hagios Nikodemos ho Hagioreites," 1983), p. 22.

4. See Margaret Mullett, "The Way Ahead: The Evergetis Project," in *The Theotokos Evergetis and Eleventh-Century Monasticism*, ed. Margaret Mullett and Anthony Kirby (Belfast, Northern Ireland: The Queen's University of Belfast, 1994), pp. 364-365.

5. The monastic and Hesychastic leanings of St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite are described by Hieromonk Evthymios in his life of the Saint, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22. St. Athanasios Parios sets forth the Hesychastic beginnings and sensitivities of St. Makarios of Corinth in his life of this great Hierarch, which can be found in *Ὁ Μέγας Συναξαριστὴς τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας* (The great collection of the lives of the Saints of the Orthodox Church), fifth edition (Kouvara, Attica: Monastery of the Transfiguration, 1979), Vol. IV, p. 290.

Preface

By Hieromonk Gorazd, Dr. Theol.
Director, Institute of Eastern Christianity,
Charles University

At the time of Creation, Adam's *nous* (his noetic or spiritual faculty) was in a state of illumination. Thus clad in God's uncreated Grace, his countenance was beautiful and brilliant and he was found on the path leading to full union with his Creator—to *theosis*. But Adam fell and lost his brilliant form; his *nous* was darkened and, as a result, he could no longer see things clearly, as they truly were, and from a proper perspective. This became the source of countless errors, sufferings, and a distorted perception of reality. His relationship with God changed, and between God and man there appeared a chasm which, from a human standpoint, was impossible to cross. No longer able to bear direct communion with God, man began to hide before Him. Man's relationship to the animal kingdom, of which he was once its master, also changed. As a consequence of sin—this rupture with the path appointed by God—there came death, corruption, and slavery to the Evil One.

Much time passed, during which period the Lord guided and educated mankind, until the appointed time was fulfilled and, in perfect synergy between the Grace of God and human free will, there came forth the woman who became the Holy Mother of God, the *Theotokos*. Through her, the *Logos*, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, became man and accepted into His Divine Hypostasis human nature, thus deifying it and thereby healing and saving it. In the Person of the *Theanthropos*, the God-Man, the abyss between God and man was bridged, and so the way was opened for all who wish to be healed and saved to achieve healing and salvation, through Christ, in His Body, the Holy Church.

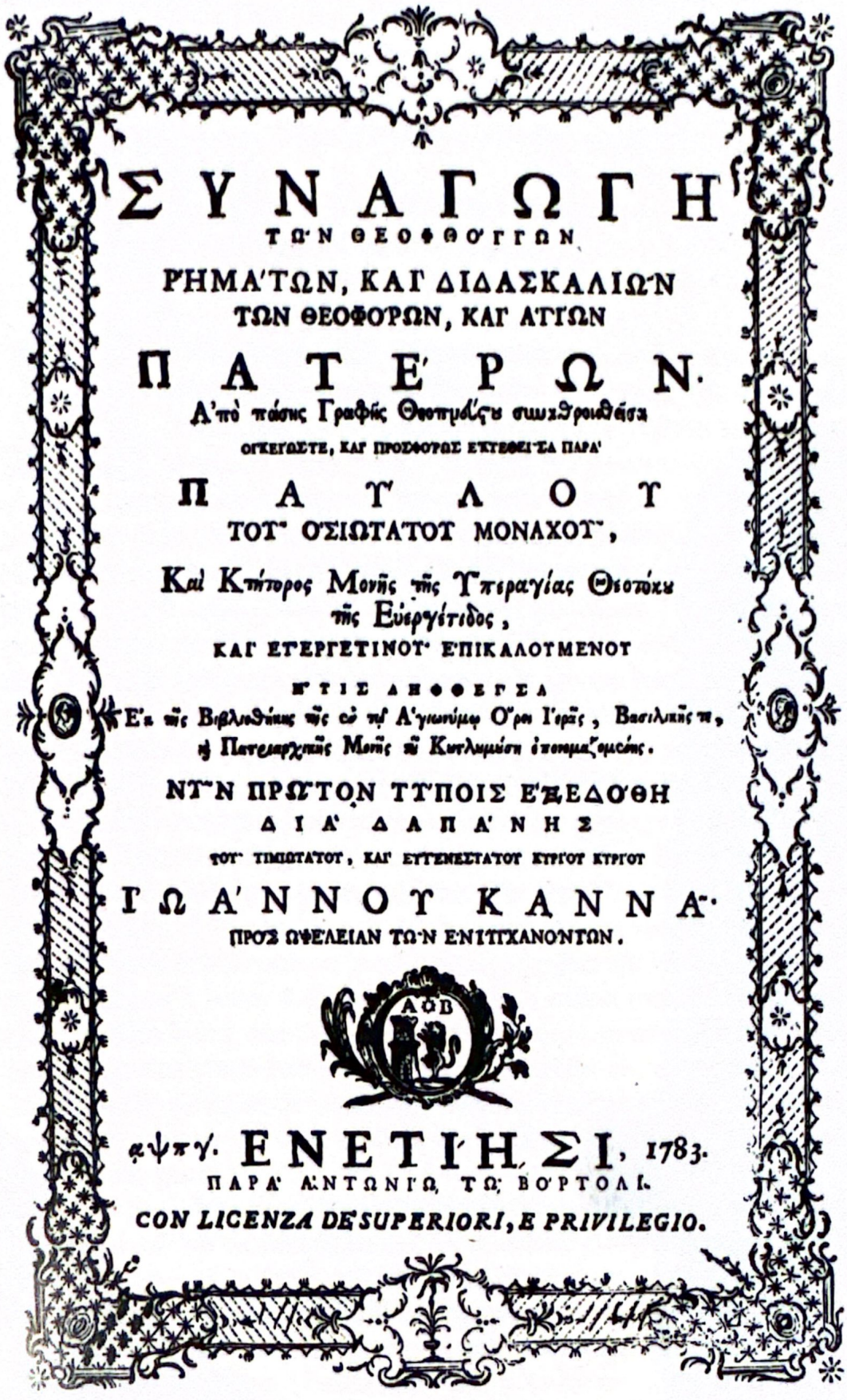
The Evergetinos is an important work that tells us how Orthodox Christians have succeeded in achieving this lofty goal. The complete text of *The Evergetinos* is presented here in the English language—in the *lingua franca* of our day—for the first time. Thanks to the labor of love

of His Eminence, Archbishop Chrysostomos and his collaborators, many who have heretofore been unable to read this precious work in the original will now be able to gain edification from the spiritual wisdom contained in it. It is refreshing for those in the West to learn that Eastern Orthodox spirituality is not something exotic or foreign. Indeed, during the whole of the first millennium of the Christian era, its spiritual tradition was that of the Christian West, as well. Among many genuine bearers of Orthodox spirituality in the West, in fact, we may mention such luminaries as St. Martin of Tours, St. Patrick of Ireland, and St. Benedict, the great expositor of Western monasticism.

Interest in Orthodox spirituality is on the rise in the West. This fact, in addition to the increasingly greater accessibility of classical works of Orthodox spirituality, is something very encouraging; however, it also entails a certain danger. The path to spiritual perfection is difficult, requiring the whole man. Moreover, it must be followed with appropriate guidelines, if it is to lead to some measure of success. For present-day aspirants, who are not always fond of perseverance, patience, responsibility, and fidelity, and who expect quick results from their spiritual strivings, the knowledge that they acquire, when it is not used in a proper spiritual context, in a correct way, and—whenever possible—with careful spiritual guidance, may even be a cause of harm. A work like *The Evergetinos* is of great value, therefore, since it warns against spiritual delusion, teaches us to seek spiritual direction, and guides us away from spiritual harm and delusion.

May this wonderful, essential, and timely translation of *The Evergetinos* be, through the prayers of the Most Holy *Theotokos* and all of the Saints, an abiding source of great spiritual benefit to all those people of goodwill who draw from its wisdom.

Prague, Czech Republic
February 14, 2008 (Old Style)



ΣΥΝΑΓΩΓΗ
ΤΩ'Ν ΘΕΟΦΘΟ'ΓΓΩΝ
Ρ'ΗΜΑ'ΤΩΝ, ΚΑΙ' ΔΙΔΑΣΚΑΛΙΩ'Ν
ΤΩΝ ΘΕΟΦΟ'ΡΩΝ, ΚΑΙ' ΑΓΙ'ΩΝ
ΠΑΤΕ'ΡΩΝ.
Α'πὸ πάσης Γραφῆς Θεοπνεύστου συναθροισθεῖσα
ΟΙΚΕΙΩΣΤΕ, ΚΑΙ' ΠΡΟΣΦΟΡΩΣ Ε'ΚΤΕΘΕΙ'ΣΑ ΠΑΡΑ'
ΠΑΥ'ΛΟΥ
ΤΟΥ' Ο'ΣΙΩΤΑ'ΤΟΥ ΜΟΝΑΧΟΥ',
Καὶ Κτήτορος Μονῆς τῆς Υπεραγίας Θεοτόκου
τῆς Εὐεργέτιδος,
ΚΑΙ' ΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΙΝΟΥ' Ε'ΠΙΚΑΛΟΥΜΕ'ΝΟΥ
Η'ΤΙΣ ΔΗΦΘΕΓΣΑ
Ε'κ τῆς Βιβλιοθήκης τῆς ἐν τῷ Α'γιωνύμῳ Ο'ρει Ι'ερᾶς, Βασιλικῆς τε,
καὶ Πατριαρχικῆς Μονῆς τοῦ Κουτλουμούση ὀνομαζομένης.
ΝΥ'Ν ΠΡΩ'ΤΟΝ ΤΥ'ΠΟΙΣ Ε'ΞΕΔΟ'ΘΗ
ΔΙΑ' ΔΑΠΑ'ΝΗΣ
ΤΟΥ' ΤΙΜΙΩΤΑ'ΤΟΥ, ΚΑΙ' ΕΥΓΕΝΕΣΤΑ'ΤΟΥ ΚΥΡΙ'ΟΥ ΚΥΡΙ'ΟΥ
ΓΩΑ'ΝΝΟΥ ΚΑΝΝΑ'.
ΠΡΟ'Σ ΩΦΕ'ΛΕΙΑΝ ΤΩ'Ν Ε'ΝΙΤΥΧΑΝΟ'ΝΤΩΝ.

ᾳψπγ. ΕΝΕΤΙΗΣΙ, 1783.
ΠΑΡΑ' Α'ΝΤΩΝΙΩ, ΤΩ' ΒΟ'ΡΤΟΛΙ.
CON LICENZA DE' SUPERIORI, E PRIVILEGIO.

Frontispiece of the first edition of The Evergetinos, *Venice, 1783*

Prologue (*Προοίμιον*)

By St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite
from the 1783 edition of
The Evergetinos

He Who transcends all understanding, and so remains unintelligible, is nonetheless believed to exist among things intelligible. Now, because He, the pre-eternal and supra-essential Mind [*νοῦς—Editors*], is by nature the author of all good things (having created the universe out of nothingness, and bringing it into completion through reason and perfecting it through His life-giving Spirit), He has willed to set boundaries by means of certain limits and laws. Thus, in His supreme goodness, He governs the most sublime noetic beings by otherworldly laws, and according to these laws the attainable effulgences move in Divine harmony and proportion: the higher beings take part directly in the attainable effulgences, whereas the lesser beings receive these effulgences only proportionately to the agency of the higher ones. He has implanted certain vital forces in bodies in this material world; these forces are generally called "physical laws." Motivated by and in accordance with such laws, these bodies carry out their appropriate actions. The term "cosmos" truly suits this condition of things. In man, He has planted the seeds of a rational faculty which is inherently critical, and as a further aid He has bestowed upon him, as it were, a command which is called moral law. Consequently, man, being directed by such law towards an unmistakable standard, vigorously sets himself apart from all evil—since evil is a deviation from the rectitude of moral law—and rationally pursues every good and every virtue; for this, indeed, is the object of moral philosophy: namely, the good.

What then does that Mind which engendered the world wish from these things? He desires to secure for Himself glory according to the universal laws of orderly and all-harmonious motion; for what is created, whether good or bad, will in any event either glorify or disgrace the Creator, as the Holy Scripture in one place states: "The heavens declare the glory of God" [Psalm 18:2—*Eds.*]. As for man, it is said, "...that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in

Heaven" [St. Matthew 5:16—*Eds.*]. To be sure, all other things (with certain exceptions), in heeding the commands of the Creator, have remained within their boundaries—as it is said: "...for thou hast set a bound that they shall not pass over" [Psalm 103:9—*Eds.*]—and in harmony, indeed in voices without words, they have glorified God; but man, on the other hand, ...man! How can I continue speaking without shedding tears? For of all things on earth, man alone was given to partake of the faculty of free will and, tempted by the malice of the Devil, waxed arrogant toward his Creator, deviating from the straightness of the right reason firmly planted in him and violating the moral laws given to him at various times; forgetting all virtue and every good, he became—alas!—the artificer of passions, leading to an immense number of sins. As a consequence, he denied God even the glory appropriate to man [as a creature of God—*Trans.*] and dishonored his own share of God's glory.

The Only-Begotten Son of God, God and *Logos*, took pity on this corpse afflicted with many misfortunes, and becoming man at an appointed time, He restored the original moral laws mentioned above. Indeed, He embellished in a surpassingly beautiful fashion the moral philosophy of the Gospel with rules and conditions more general and even more perfect than the previous ones. He was the first to fulfill this philosophy through His own works, and He glorified God on earth through these works. In so doing, He has handed down to us this moral philosophy, so that, following in His footsteps, we might prove to practice every kind of virtue and, in turn, glorify the Creator. For only thus can we return to that originally intended by God. Furthermore, He has commanded the greater part of humanity to abide by this moral philosophy steadfastly and to cling to it in practice. And as for those who are able to advance further, He has allowed them even to add to this whatever texts they might emulate out of their love for God. He intimated this unambiguously when, referring to "castration" as the mystery of virginity, He said: "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" [St. Matthew 19:12—*Eds.*]; secondly, when He spoke about the two denarii, signifying, I believe, the Old and New Testaments alike; and lastly, when He said, "...and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee" [St. Luke 10:35—*Eds.*].

The whole of the moral philosophy of the Gospels summons all men to itself. There are those who concern themselves in this or that way with certain other types of philosophy; and of these persons, some spend all of their days studying, say, mathematics or physics, while oth-

ers concentrate on metaphysics and more general subjects. Yet they entirely neglect moral philosophy, even though it is both the paramount and most necessary of all types of philosophy. These men study the harmony and order of the heavens, and earth, and all other matters. But because they do not know, as they ought, that the investigation of ourselves is distinctly superior to that of alien matters and, moreover, because they do not know that knowledge on its own—that is, being bereft of practical application—has no substance and does not differ from fantasy, as the holy Maximos notes, precious few of these men address the question of how to bring themselves into harmony with the beauty of moral life, or how to learn true virtues through experience. Now, I ask you: What is the good of materialistic philosophy, when the soul has a philosophy of its own, yet is crudely beset by passions? I, for one, see no good. Surely we must apply ourselves to moral philosophy, or risk being found wanting in relation to our higher aspect.

Such as these former things much concern the majority of people. The God-fearing Fathers, however, determined that their most holy system was superior, sensing with the more percipient eyes of the mind how truly beneficial is this moral type of philosophy and how readily they might advance to the other kinds of philosophy if they should first become facile in the system in question. Yet, because they well knew that moral life is contemporaneous with man, as has been said already, and, furthermore, that it takes precedence over all other types of philosophy, owing to its antiquity, they did not pay attention to the remaining types. Instead, they concentrated exclusively on moral philosophy. And so, isolating themselves in the "deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" [Hebrews 11:38—*Eds.*], to quote St. Paul, and having chosen unbroken silence, they set themselves to the task of uncovering, in a positive, exact fashion, the original causes of the passions and eradicating them. Moreover, it was not sufficient for them to acquire merely a disposition to virtue, or perchance to experience virtue haphazardly—for this anyone can do. Through force of habit, which became second nature, as it were, they had to become fully integrated and develop in these virtues. These men, through sweat and prolonged ascetic labor, developed these virtues. That is, they adopted the Gospel's more general laws about virtue as the supreme principles of their individual philosophies, putting them into practice day and night. In time, they came to distinguish categories of virtues falling under each law. Though assailed by manifold temptations, both human and demonic, though emaciated through great feats of abstinence and other physical

rigors, after running all the courses of an arduous race, they achieved all virtues and attained a "scientific" knowledge thereof. They made an addendum to the Gospel which is especially noteworthy for those with spiritual knowledge, and through the eagerness of their free choice, they surpassed the commandments given by God to man.

Indeed, having by their virtues paid back to their Lord with interest that demanded of them, the Fathers glorified God (which, as has been said, was God's main intention for man). Furthermore, through their writings, they conveyed to us, as though we were good investors, a share of their "scientific knowledge" of the virtues, so that, following their examples, we might also rise, as far as possible, to the accomplishment of perfection by virtue. Let me illustrate my point. Just as those interested in physiology determine bodily properties by means of countless instruments and after numerous experiments, chemical analyses, and multifarious tests, in similar fashion these men of God experienced countless temptations, carried out trials and experiments over numerous years (for it could take these men up to fifty years to test a single principle), and discovered, by the illuminating guidance of the Holy Spirit, the depths of moral philosophy, refining these virtues out of their respective excesses and deficiencies. In this fashion, these men still teach us with redoubled accuracy, fourfold passionlessness, obedience leading to perfection, all-virtuous humility, God-reflecting spiritual discretion, pleasant hospitality, God-imitating compassion, the soul-saving giving of alms, ceaseless prayer, utter contrition, truthful confession, and the rest of the golden chain of virtues.

What is more, these men teach us which virtues are bodily, which are spiritual, and which noetic; and how and to what extent and why, if put into practice, they are welcome or not. They teach us which passions are general or specific, which in turn are bodily, spiritual, or noetic, and how one might readily be rid of these. In short, these men set forth the man in Christ. Indeed, it is extraordinary that the sayings of these blessed desert Elders, though couched in a simple, colloquial style, nonetheless greatly enrich us with their immediacy, so that they influence nearly all those who read them. Many may dispute about various interpretations of a text without being able to convince one another, while a single argument—the very deeds of these wise Fathers—immediately convinces and draws hearers and readers alike to agreement. According also to the wise ancients, the tool of ethics is argumentation from probability; however, the arguments of the Fathers in a way entail, as well, a convincing force coupled with this probability, since they

bear in all that they do the mark of truth. The popular [though misguided—*Trans.*] aphorism, "If you see a young man rushing off recklessly [to the desert—*Trans.*], it is because an Elder has duped him," confirms this very point [i.e., the persuasive power of the Fathers—*Trans.*]; for, surely, whoever calls the words of these Divine Fathers the criteria, foundations, and laws of moral philosophy will be speaking the truth.

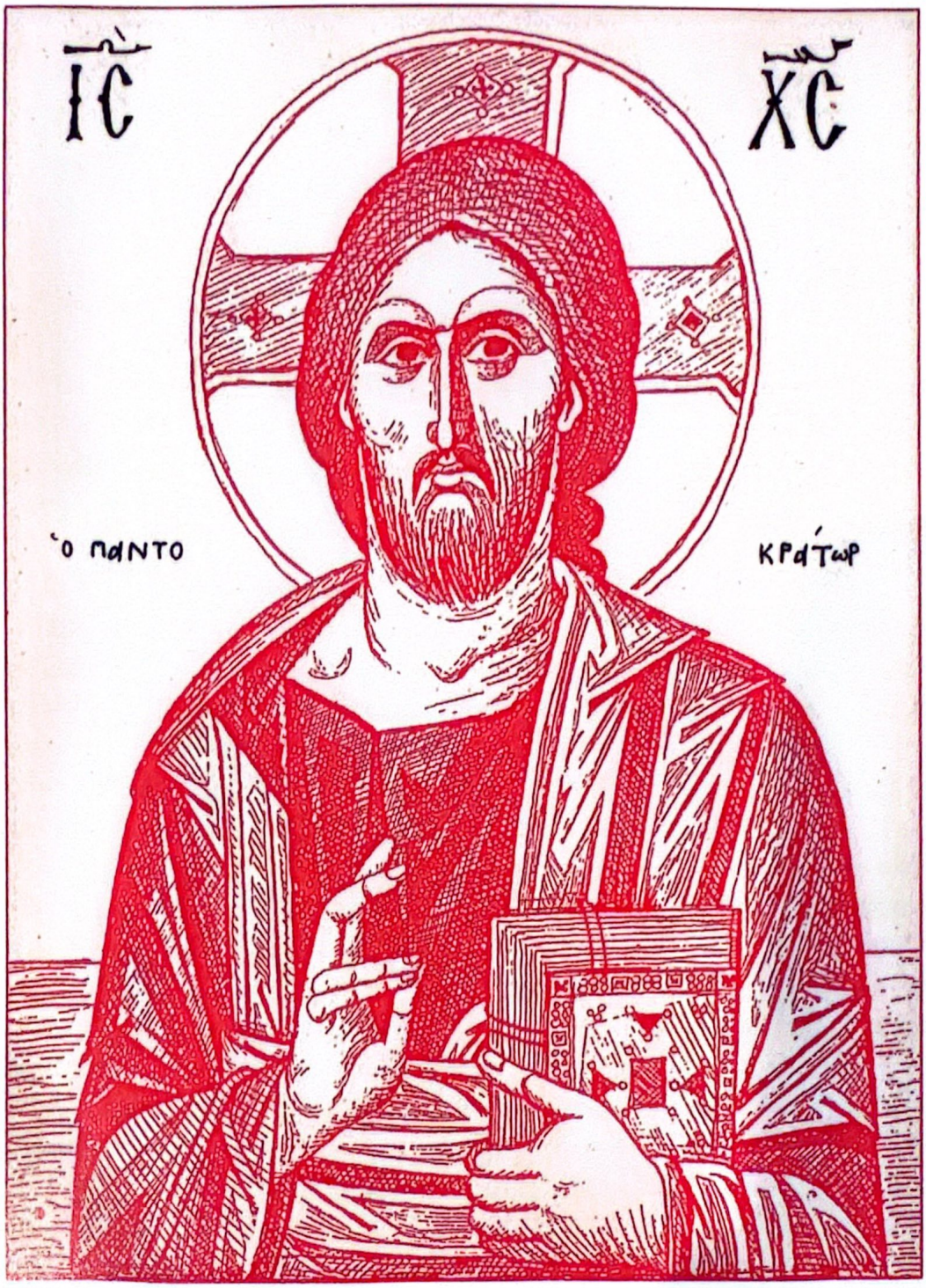
Now, Paul, the most holy among monks—erstwhile founder of the sacred Monastery of the Most Holy *Theotokos*, which was also called the Monastery of the *Evergetis* [Benefactress—*Trans.*], whence Paul's nickname, "*Evergetinos*"—knew that these narratives, though scattered here and there, were generally helpful; so he classified them under various headings, according to subject-matter, and divided this material into four books, thereby creating a single *corpus*. This work, thoroughly appreciated and very useful as it was to all experts, was nevertheless only available to a mere handful of persons, on account of the difficulty and great cost of copying. Consequently, the work was never published and remains entirely unknown to non-experts. Someone, therefore, had to publish it for the general good and to entrust this pure and reasonable piece of silver to knowledgeable investors. One such man was Ioannes Kannas [a Christian from Smyrna—*Trans.*], a man excellent in all respects, most pious and noble; his soul loved God, his manner imitated Christ, and he was kind to the poor and tolerant in his outlook—two brilliant and illustrious qualities. One might say that moral virtues had agreed to inhabit his soul.

Taking part in all seemly exertions, this man did not shy away from pursuing the first prize. Indeed, he left no stone unturned (as the proverb has it), not contenting himself with lesser awards. Being a man active in all affairs promoting the common good, as though having chanced upon a windfall and breathing an ardent zeal for the sake of his fellows, and, indeed, being inspired by Grace from above, he of his own volition left all for this undertaking, being wholly adorned with the moral virtues appropriate to familiarizing oneself with this moral Bible. And thus, having snatched this all-brilliant light of moral life and this lamp on high from an earlier obscurity, as though hidden under a bushel, and having raised it, at his own expense, to the lofty tower of the printed word, he has permitted its light to shine bountifully and freely, becoming known to virtually the entire inhabited world, into which the word of salvation has spread. In doing this, he has become a promoter of the glory of God, rousing all to the practice of virtue and, through this, to the contemplation of God's glory; and since it is universally con-

fessed that to promote the glory of God is a glory beyond all other glories, one can see how sublime is the honor which this man, himself, has thus gained.

Now that this precise rule of virtue, this teacher of the passionlessness of the mind of the ancient and wise Fathers, this venerable account of aged counsels—in one word, this treasury gathering together all of moral worth—has been brought to light, ...let the Solons be silent; let the Lycurguses pass away; let the Socrateses be buried in forgetfulness; let the Aristotles and the Platos hide themselves; and with these, all the other philosophers who now or in the past have written on matters concerning moral virtue. For they strayed away from the true aim of moral life (that is, from what is in essence good), since they had not God, the summit of all good and by Whom all virtue directed toward Him is rewarded, as the aim of their philosophy, but natural and temporal good. Thus, having failed in their aim, it is clear that the virtues which they teach are not true ones either, if, as it is said, every aspect of behavior is determined by its goal.

And all of you who are partakers of the heavenly Orthodox calling, who, looking to God alone, desire to adorn your souls with every kind of virtue: put forth your arms like two golden stanchions and receive and store up this harvest; or, in the words of Scripture, receive this sacred embrace and with much joy press it close to your breast. As you constantly read it, gather from it the sweetest fruits of edification and desist not, I beg you, from interceding before the Lord for him who planted this harvest at his own cost and for him who worked together with him to water it. Thus you will show forth a disposition to gratitude, that, in your love for the Fathers, whom "the Lord chose to love" [Deuteronomy 10:15—*Eds.*], you might everyday seek their counsel, ordering your life according to their wise, time-tested, and God-given instructions, as it has been commanded: "Ask thy Father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee" [Deuteronomy 32:7—*Eds.*]; and that you might, in so ordering your life, become practitioners of moral virtue and, in practicing the virtues, give glory to your Father Who is in Heaven, together with His Only-Begotten Son and His Life-Giving Spirit, the one God of all, to Whom be all glory, honor, and worship unto the ages of ages. Amen.



For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

II Corinthians 6:16–18

Generous Benefactress of the Repentant

Hypothesis I

No one should despair ever, even if he has committed many sins, but should have hope that, through repentance, he shall be saved.

A. From the Holy Palladios

Our holy Father John, who lived in asceticism on a mountain near the city of Lyko [or Lykopolis—*Trans.*] and about whom details are cited in another chapter, relates to us this about the need [for monks—*Trans.*] to avoid many interactions with women [or nuns with men—*Trans.*].

1. There once lived in the city, it was said, a young man who committed many and frightful sins. However, this young man was piercingly censured by his conscience, on account of his manifold sins, and with the help of God came to repentance. Under the power of repentance, he went to a cemetery, where he established himself in one of the tombs and lamented for his former life, falling down with his face to the earth and continually groaning from the depths of his heart.

When he had passed a week in this state of unrelenting and persistent repentance, demons, who had before brought his life to destruction, gathered around one night making noise and shouting: "Who is this impious man, who used to pass his time in lustful things and immorality, yet now wants us to think that he is sober and a doer of good deeds? And he wants to be a Christian and become virtuous, now that he can no longer have fun and fulfill his pleasures? What good can he expect in his life, since he is filled with our evils?

"Hey you! Will you not get up from there at all? Will you not come with us to your customary places of sin and depravity? Fallen women and wine await you—will you not come to indulge your desires? After all the sins that you have committed up to this day, all hope for salvation is lost to you, and therefore, O struggler, you will only march on full speed to your damnation if you continue killing yourself in this way. Why are you so intent and in such a hurry to be damned? Whatever transgression that there is, you committed it; together with us, you fell to every sin. Yet now you dare to flee our company? Do you not agree? Will you not go along with our offers?"

Meanwhile, however, the young man persisted in the sorrow of repentance and, appearing not to hear the exhortations of the demons, did not answer them at all. So the demons, seeing that they had accomplished nothing with their words, fell upon him, beat him cruelly, and, when they had thoroughly wounded him, left him half-dead. But still the youth remained immovable in his place, groaning but steadfast in his inexorable repentance.

During this time, the young man's relatives sought him out, finally finding him. Having learned the reason for his appearance—that is, of the brazen attack of the demons—they tried to take him with them to their home. He, however, refused to abandon the place of his repentance.

The following night, the demons again attacked him and tormented him even more greatly. His relatives visited him for a second time, though without persuading him to leave his place of punishment and follow them. To their proposals on the matter, he answered patiently and with resignation:

"Do not pressure me. I prefer to die than to return to my former prodigal life."

The third night he almost died from the cruel torments of the demons, who attacked him with greater severity than all of the other times.

After that, the demons, having accomplished nothing with their threats and torments—for the young man would not change his mind at any scare tactic—departed and left him alone.

Fleeing from him, they cried madly:

"He conquered us! He conquered us! He conquered us!"

From that time on, nothing bad happened to the youth; rather, with a clean conscience he came to realize every virtue. Until the end of his life, he remained in the tomb, which he made his hermitage, coming to be honored by God with the gifts of miraculous deeds.

B. From the Life of St. Synkletike

The Blessed Synkletike said: We should laud remiss and indolent souls who are easily exhausted in the struggle for good, as well as those souls who are easily discouraged and fall to despair. Indeed if such souls should display even the smallest good deed, we must praise it and marvel at it, giving them encouragement in their struggle for the good. Contrarily, the most serious and greatest of their faults we must character-

ize, in front of them, as the least and unworthy of note. For the Devil, who wishes to destroy all things, or rather to succeed at our spiritual destruction, resorts to the following ruse. On the one hand, with accomplished and ascetic monastics, he tries to cover their sins and to make them forget them, so as to create pride in them. On the other hand, he constantly exposes the sins of neophytes—whose souls have not yet been strengthened in the ascetic life—before them, exaggerating these sins, so as to drive such neophytes to despair, until they abandon their ascetic efforts.

For this reason, then, these still irresolute souls we must care for with tenderness, reminding them continually of the boundless compassion and kindness of God. Among other things, we must emphasize that our Lord is merciful and long-enduring and that He annuls His righteous judgments against wrong-doers, as long as they surely repent.

To render this teaching of ours convincing, we will bring forth examples from Holy Scripture, which will reveal to the souls of our listeners the endless compassion of the Lord towards those who have sinned and repented. For example, let us recall that Raab was a prostitute,* but was saved through her faith; St. Paul was a persecutor, but through repentance became a chosen vessel; and the thief who was crucified together with Christ on Golgotha, who had stolen and murdered, first opened the door of Paradise with one word of repentance: "Remember me, Lord, when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." Moreover, let us cite the instance of St. Matthew, who was appointed to the Apostolic ranks by the Lord and who, even though a former tax collector, relates the parable of the tax collector, as well as that of the Prodigal Son. In general, then, let us bring to mind all of the stories in this regard which emphasize the worth of repentance and which extol the compassion of God towards the repentant man.

On the other hand, we must correct those souls who are ruled by pride by providing them with greater examples, just as we give the weaker souls encouragement, so as not to be ruled by despair. Let us take an example from the work of the best gardeners, who, when they see that a plant is of small stature and sickly, water it profusely and care for it greatly, so that it will grow and be strong; while, when seeing in a plant the premature development of sprouts, they immediately trim the useless sprouts, so that the plant does not quickly wither. Likewise, physicians give rich nourishment to some patients, prescribing that they walk, while to others they give a strict diet and require them to remain at rest.

C. From the Holy Palladios

From various stories, I learned the following about St. Moses the Ethiopian, who was well known among the Fathers of the skete. It seems that he, before becoming a monk, was the servant of a certain freeman. His master, however, threw him out of his house, since Moses was very cantankerous and his manners were offensive and savage. When he was dismissed, Moses became a thief; and, because of his exceptional strength, he became the leader of other thieves.

Among his other exploits as a thief, which show his fierceness, it is said that he once got it into his mind to get even with a certain shepherd, since the shepherd's sheepdogs had prevented him, one night, from carrying out a crime which he had planned. To this end, he carefully scouted out the region, in order to find the shepherd and his flock and to murder the shepherd.

As soon as he learned that the shepherd was on the other side of the Nile, he decided to go there to fulfill his criminal intent. It was at that time of the year that the river floods and the current had reached its high point. So, Moses took off his short tunic, which he happened to be wearing, put it on top of his head, held his knife in his teeth, and awesome and astonishing though it be, jumped into the river and, swimming, crossed to the other bank. When the shepherd, from far off, saw Moses come swimming towards where he was, he took off running and found a hiding place.

Therefore, Moses was unable to get even with the shepherd, as he had planned. So, he directed all of his mania against the herd. As though he had the shepherd in his hands, he seized the four best rams and tied them up, one by one. He then again crossed the Nile, swimming. Afterwards, he came to a knoll, skinned the sheep, and lighted a fire where he roasted the best meat from the carcasses. Simultaneously, he exchanged the skins for a good wine from Sain [Aswan—*Trans.*] in Egypt and drank a great amount. When he was more than filled with this food and had satisfied his anger, he departed for his hide-out, which was about fifty leagues distant.

Then this fearsome and mighty thief, after some time and thanks to a fortuitous event, accepted the visitation of Divine Grace, tasted of the salvific feeling of contrition, and repented for his former life. Indeed, so deep and sincere was his repentance, that he embraced the monastic life, went to Sketis, enclosed himself in a cell, and gave himself over to severe and strict asceticism.

It is further said, indeed, that at the beginning of his monastic life, when he had settled in a cell, four thieves set upon him, evidently not knowing that the monk whom they had decided to rob was Moses. And what happened during this attempted robbery of the former thief? Moses overcame them immediately with amazing ease, tied them up, and put them over his shoulders with such adroitness that it seemed as though he were picking up a sack of straw. He then proceeded to take them to the Church, where he said to the brothers:

"Since I no longer allow myself to do wrong to anyone, what do you advise me to do with these four here, who attacked me in order to rob me?"

The astonished brothers of the skete untied the thieves and allowed them to go free.

Then the thieves themselves recognized Moses. Seeing his repentance, they too wished not to return to their former lives of thievery. Thus, following the example of St. Moses and abandoning the life of sin and crime, they became monks and were distinguished for their struggles in asceticism and the virtuous life.

St. Moses, thereafter, exhibited the same perfect asceticism about which yet other things are written in other books. He warred with great firmness against the demons and was distinguished in all of the arenas of ascetic endurance, such that he was quickly ranked among the older and perfected Fathers, being ordained a Presbyter and enriched by the greatest gifts of the Holy Spirit. At his death, he left behind seventy disciples.

D. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Mios was asked by a soldier: "Father, God then accepts the repentance of the sinner?" The Elder, after counselling him with many instructive words, suddenly asked him:

"Tell me, my beloved, when you tear your uniform, do you throw it away?"

"No," the soldier answered, "I sew it and use it anew."

Then Abba Mios also thoughtfully told him:

"If you take pity on your clothing, will not God take pity on His own creation?"

2. A brother asked Abba Poimen:

"Father, I committed a great sin. Is it enough for me to repent for

three years?"

The Elder answered:

"That is too long a period of time."

Those in attendance asked, with a certain curiosity:

"Is forty days of repentance a long enough period of repentance?"

To the question of these observers, the Elder answered:

"Again, this is too long. It is my opinion that, if a man repents with his whole heart and does not repeat the sin, within three days only, God will accept his repentance and forgive him."

3. Yet another brother asked Abba Poimen:

"If someone falls to some sin and repents, does God forgive him?" Most pensively, Abba Poimen answered: "Would not He, Who gave to men the commandment that they must forgive, Himself fulfill it? It is well known that He gave an order to the Apostle Peter to forgive those who do wrong and repent, even seven times seventy."

4. And a third brother asked Abba Poimen:

"Father, what is repentance for sin?" The Elder replied to the brother's inquiry:

"Repentance signifies a firm resolution not to return to a sin. For this reason precisely the righteous are called blameless, for they have abandoned sin and have been shown righteous."

5. A certain brother asked Abba Sisoes:

"Counsel me, Father, for I have fallen to sin. What am I to do?"

The Elder said to him:

"When you fall, get up again."

With bitterness the sinning brother continued:

"Ah! Father, I got up, yet I fell to the same sin again."

The Elder, so as not to discourage the brother, answered:

"Then get up again and again."

The young man asked with a certain despondency:

"How long can I do that, Father?"

The Elder, giving him courage, said to the brother:

"Until the end of your life, whether you be found in the commendable attempt at lifting yourself up from sin or falling again to it. For wherever it is that a man is found at the last moment of his life on earth, whether it be in things good or evil, there he will be judged, going forth either to punishment or to reward."

6. A brother lived in a cell in Egypt and, with all humility, spent his life in asceticism. This monk had a sister who lived in the city and who was a prostitute. She had been the cause of many losing their souls each day. Thus, many times the Elders had urged the brother to go meet with his sister. At last, they one day convinced him to go, that perchance his brotherly admonitions might have the desired effect and she might cease the sin that she was committing.

As soon as he arrived at the place where the sinful woman was staying, a certain acquaintance of theirs saw the monk and ran to inform her, saying: "Your brother is asking for you at the door below." The sister, on hearing this news, abandoned her sinful compatriots and, just as she was, ran down to greet her brother, without bothering, in fact, even to put a covering on her head. When the brother and sister saw one another and she, out of joy, tried to embrace her brother, he said:

"Truly, my sister, I pity your soul, beholding how you will suffer the bitter and unending torments of Hell, for not only have you lost your soul, but many others have also done so because of you."

The sister listened attentively to the sincere counsels of her brother and, overwhelmed by them, with true repentance said to him:

"Are you sure that, even now, I can be saved?"

"If you wish so, there is salvation," the kind brother answered with certainty.

With tears in her eyes, she then fell at the feet of her brother and doggedly entreated him to take her with him into the desert to be saved.

The brother, also moved by her sudden conversion, told his sister:

"Put a scarf on your head and follow me."

She, however, said to her brother:

"Come, come, let us go quickly. It is preferable for me and better for my soul if I leave this vile place and set forth on the way bare-headed, and not enter again into this workshop of sin."

They thus departed for the desert, and the brother advised her tenderly, enumerating for her the fruits of repentance. She listened with silent attention, while Divine Grace slowly won over the soul of the repentant sinner.

Then at a certain point in their journey, they saw some wayfarers coming toward them from the opposite direction. So the brother, in order not to cause scandal to them, told his sister:

"Since not everyone knows that you are my sister, get off the road just a little until these people pass by, so that we do not cause them scandal."

The sister immediately went away, some distance from the road.

When the caravan had passed, the brother called to his sister.

But he received no answer at all. Curious, he searched the place where he expected her to be and, astonished, saw that she was dead. He noticed at the same time that her feet were torn to pieces from the trip, since she was barefoot.

The brother related these incidents to the Elders. They, taking counsel regarding the matter, all disagreed, some maintaining that she was saved, others insisting that she had lost her soul.

Finally, after praying, one of the Elders, who appears to have been more virtuous and insightful than the others, received the following revelation from God: "This sinner was saved, for as soon as Divine Grace, at the counsels of her brother, moved her heart, she repented and thought of no material thing. But rather, she gave no heed to her body and did not complain about the pain and wounds inflicted by the journey. For this reason, her repentance was accepted."

E. St. Amphilochios on Avoiding Despair

1. A certain brother, overcome by the passion of wantonness, sinned every day. However, each time, with tears and prayers, he would fall before the Master and Lord and receive forgiveness from Him. And as soon as he had repented, the next day, being misled again by shameful habit, he would fall to sin.

Afterwards, having sinned, he would go to the Church, where he would prostrate himself before the honorable and revered Icon of our Lord Jesus Christ and tearfully confess to Jesus: "Lord, have mercy upon me and take away from me this fearful temptation, for it troubles me fiercely and wounds me with the bitter taste of the pleasures. O my Master, cleanse my person once more, that I may gaze upon Thine Icon and see Thy holy form and the sight of Thy face, brighter than the sun, that my heart might be sweetened and thankful."

And though his lips had just whispered these words, no sooner would he leave the Church than he would fall once again to sin.

Despite this, however, he did not despair of his salvation, but, returning from his sinful deed, would cry out in the Church the same words to God—to the Lord, Who loves mankind—adding the following: "My Lord, I swear to Thee on my word that I shall no longer commit this sin. Only forgive me, Good and Most Merciful Lord, whatever sins I have committed, from the beginning to this moment."

No sooner would he utter these awe-inspiring words, than he would find himself the captive of this evil sin. Let no one cease to marvel at the sweet love of God towards mankind and at His boundless goodness, with which He each day tolerated the uncorrected and evil transgression and ingratitude of the brother. Indeed, God, because of the greatness of His mercy, persistently accepted the repentance of that sinful brother and his inevitable return. For this happened not for one or two or three years, but for more than ten years.

Do you see, my brother, the measureless forbearance and boundless love of the Master? How He continually endures, showing to us kindness, tolerating our terrible transgressions and sins? And what evokes astonishment and wonderment with regard to the rich mercies of God is that He did not become wrathful with the brother in question, though the brother, agreeing not to fall to sin again, continually broke his word.

At any rate, one day when all that we have described again occurred, the brother, having fallen to sin, rushed to the Church, lamenting, groaning, and crying with anguish, to invoke the mercy of God, that He might have compassion on him and take him from the sin of immorality.

No sooner had he called on God, the Lover of man, than the Devil, that evil of old and destroyer of our souls, seeing that he could gain nothing, since whatever he accomplished by sin, the brother expunged by his repentance, became infuriated and appeared visibly before the brother. Facing the Icon of Christ, the Devil said to our compassionate Savior: "What will become of the two of us, Jesus Christ? Your sympathy for this sinner defeats me and takes the ground I have gained, since You keep accepting this dissolute man and prodigal, who daily mocks You and scorns Your authority. Indeed, why is it that You do not burn him up, but, rather, tolerate and put up with him? ...Is it because one day You intend to condemn all of the adulterers and the dissolute, and You will destroy all sinners?

"Actually, You are not a just Judge. But by whim Your power is sometimes applied leniently and overlooks things. So, while I was cast from the heavens down to the abyss for a little breach of pride, to this fellow here, even though an immoral man and a prodigal, You calmly show Your sympathy, just because he throws himself down in front of Your Icon.

"In what way can You be called a just Judge, then? For, as I see it, You receive individual people with great kindness, but ignore justice in general."

The Devil said all of this, poisoned with great bitterness, whilst there poured forth from his nostrils a black flame.

Having said these things, he fell silent. A voice was heard in response, coming forth from the Divine sanctuary, saying the following: "O all-cunning and ruinous dragon, are you yet not satisfied with your evil and destructive desire to gobble up the world? Now you have even the nerve to try to do away with this man, who has come with contrition to entreat the mercy of My compassion—to devour him, too? Can you offer up enough sins that, by them, you can tilt the balance of justice against the precious blood which I shed on the Cross for this man? Behold My murder and death, which I endured for the forgiveness of his sins.

"You, when he turns again to sin, do not turn him away, but receive him with joy, neither chastising him nor preventing him from committing sin, out of the hope that you might win him over. Yet I, Who am merciful and love mankind, Who counselled My laudable Apostle, Peter, to forgive sins seven times seventy (St. Matthew 18:22), do I not show him mercy and compassion? Indeed—simply because he flees to Me—I will not turn him away until I have won him over. Furthermore, I was crucified for sinners and for their salvation; My immaculate hands were nailed to the Cross, that those who so wish might take refuge in Me and be saved. For this reason, then, I neither turn away nor reject anyone, even if he should fall many times a day and many times return to Me; such a person will not leave My Temple saddened, for I came not to call the righteous, but to call sinners to repent."

During the time that this voice was heard, the Devil was fixed in his place, trembling and unable to run away. The voice then again began to say: "We have heard from all that you say, O Seducer, that I am not just; to the contrary, I am just beyond all. In whatever moral state I find a person, in that state I judge him. Look at this man, who a few moments ago repented, having returned from sin and having fallen at My feet with a sincere resolution to abandon sin, and thereby having conquered you.

"Therefore, I will accept him immediately and save his soul, since he did not lose hope in his hard toil for salvation.

"Look how much he merits by his repentance before Me, for which he is honored. As for you, let your hatred be shred to pieces and you disgraced."

While this was being said, the repentant brother had thrown himself before the Icon of the Savior. With his face to the ground and lamenting,

he surrendered his spirit to the Lord. At the same time that the repentant brother departed to the Lord, a great tempest fell upon Satan, like a fire from Heaven, and devoured him. From this incident, my brothers, let us learn of the limitless compassion of God and of His love of man—what a good Master we have!—that we might never again be disheartened by our sins, but rather look after our salvation with zeal.

2. Again, another brother, having repented of all of the sins that he had committed, attained peace (he no longer fell to any misdeed or sins). It so happened that almost immediately thereafter, he stumbled on a rock and injured his foot. So much blood flowed from the wound that he lost consciousness and died. After his death, the demons immediately came, wishing to take his soul.

However, the Angels stopped them and told them:

"Look at that rock and see his blood, which he shed in struggle for his love of the Lord."

When they had said this, the Angels ascended with him to Heaven, his soul free of sin.

3. Satan appeared to a brother who had fallen to sin and said to him:

"You are not a Christian."

The brother, without being ensnared by this thought of the Devil, answered:

"Regardless of what I am today, from now on I will flee from you."

Satan, attempting to cast him into despair, spoke again to him:

"I tell you that you are going to Hell."

The brother, not losing his courage, answered a second time:

"You are neither my judge nor my God."

So Satan took leave, having accomplished nothing.

The brother then repented sincerely before God and became a valiant struggler.

4. A brother, possessed by sadness and melancholy, went to an Elder and asked of him:

"What am I to do? My thoughts present me with the idea that perhaps in vain I denied the world, and that I cannot be saved."

Pensively, the Elder answered as follows:

"My child, even if we do not succeed in reaching the promised land, it is better that we should give our carcasses to the desert than return to the Egypt of fearful enslavement" (Numbers 14:29-33).

5. Another brother asked the same Elder:

"Father, to what does the Prophet refer when he says, 'There is no salvation for him in his God' (Psalm 3:3)?"

The Elder gave the following response to the brother's inquiry:

"He is referring to thoughts of despair, which the demons place before the sinner, saying: 'Neither now nor hereafter is it possible for God to save you.' With such counsel they try to cast the sinner into despair. But a person must contrast these thoughts with the words of Holy Scripture: 'Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the snare' (Psalm 24:15)."

6. One of the desert Fathers relates the following beneficial story: In Thessaloniki, there was once a convent of virgins. One of the nuns of the convent, by virtue of the works of the Tempter, left the monastery and fell to prostitution. She remained in this loathsome sin of immorality for a number of years. Yet after some time, with the help of God, Who loves mankind, she repented and returned to her convent. But before she was able to enter into the convent, she fell dead at the gates. In the meantime, her death was revealed to a certain holy man. In this revelatory vision, he saw—among other things—both the Holy Angels who had come to take her soul and the demons following behind the soul. On the one hand, the Angels claimed that the nun had returned to the convent repentant, and thus her soul belonged to them. But the demons answered: "She has worked so many years for us, and therefore her soul should be ours. Moreover, she did not even manage to enter into the convent. How, then, can you claim that she repented?"

The Angels, however, cut them off, saying that from the moment that God, Who is omniscient, perceived that the nun's intention was aimed at repentance, He gladly received her and she was justified. "She was master over her repentance, in reaching the goal which she had intended; the Lord over her life, however, is the Master of all."

After hearing these words, the demons were thwarted and departed, leaving the soul to the Angels.

The holy man who beheld this vision related it to others.

7. Abba Alonios said: "If a man but so desires, he can return to the Divine standard and repent anytime, whether early or late."

8. A brother posed the following question to Abba Moses:

"Let us suppose that a man beats his servant for a certain trans-

gression. What should the servant say?"

The Elder replied:

"If he is a good servant, he will say: 'My lord, have mercy on me, for I have done wrong.'"

The brother asked again:

"Should the servant say nothing else?"

And the Elder answered again:

"Nothing else. For having admitted and confessed his fault and having said, 'I have done wrong,' immediately his lord will take pity on him from the depth of his soul and forgive him."

9. A brother said to Abba Poimen:

"When I fall to some deplorable sin, my conscience eats me up and sharply reproaches me for having fallen to that sin."

The Elder answered the brother as follows:

"If, at the very moment that he commits a sin, a person says, 'I have sinned,' his conscience ceases to be troubled."

10. The parents of a young girl by the name of Taisia died and left her an orphan. The young woman converted her home into a guest house for the Fathers of a neighboring skete. For many years she thus welcomed them and showed them care through her hospitality.

After some time, however, having spent all that she had in her hospitable work for the Fathers, she fell into need and became poor.

So it was that she fell in with some perverted people, who led her to change her way of life and to abandon the path of virtue. The result of these destructive associations of hers was that Taisia flourished ever more in the way of sin, ending up, in time, in prostitution.

When the Fathers heard of her plight, it much saddened them.

So, they called upon Abba John the Short and said to him: "We have learned that our sister Taisia is living in sin. It is well known that, when she was still able, she showed us her love and hospitality and gave us rest. It is now time for us to help her as much as we can. Take upon yourself the task, then, of meeting with her and try, with the wisdom that God has given you, to set her aright and to pull her out of the mud of debauchery."

The Elder thus went to the den of sin where Taisia was staying.

"Inform your mistress, please, that I am asking for her," he told the old woman who was the doorkeeper of the house of ill repute.

"Get out of here, monk," the old woman told him angrily. "You

monks early on took all that she had and have left her poor now."

"Please go and do as I asked you," the Elder insisted, "because I aim to bring her great benefit."

The old woman finally stubbornly went upstairs and yelled to Taisia that some monk wanted to visit her.

"Those monks," Taisia thought, on hearing who it was who was asking for her, "frequently live near the Red Sea and find valuable pearls."

Having adorned herself with special care, she lay down on her bed and said to the old female porter:

"Bring the monk to me."

So, in fact, shortly Abba John entered the appointed room and sat near her. Looking carefully into her face, he said emotionally:

"What is it that you have against Jesus, and why do you blame Him for coming to such a state as this?"

She, upon hearing these words, was totally paralyzed. At the same time, the Elder lowered his head and began to weep in sobs.

Shaken, Taisia then asked him:

"Abba, why are you crying?"

Abba John, raising his head a little, and then lowering it again, said:

"How can I see Satan playing on your face and not cry?"

At this remark, the sinful Taisia asked:

"Is there such a thing as repentance, Father?"

"Yes, there is," the Elder replied.

"Then take me with you," Taisia said, "and direct me as you will."

"So, let us go now."

At the beckoning of the Elder, the repentant sinner immediately arose to follow him.

The Elder was beset by astonishment, since he saw that Taisia had no interest in settling her household matters, but left things just as they were and followed him.

By the time they reached the desert, it had become completely dark. Abba John prepared a little place to sleep for her and, having made the sign of the Cross on it, told her:

"Sleep here." And after he had prepared for himself an improvised place to sleep on the ground, a short distance away, he completed his prayers and lay down to rest.

During the middle of the night, he awakened and saw a strange spectacle: He saw a shining pathway leading heavenward from the spot where Taisia was sleeping and Angels of God leading the soul of the repentant sinner upwards along it.

Immediately he got up and, rushing toward Taisia, tapped her lightly with his foot. Once he realized that she was indeed dead, he prostrated with his face to the earth and entreated God to reveal to him whether He had accepted Taisia's repentance. Praying in this manner, he heard a voice from God, which said to him:

"The single hour for which this woman repented was more quickly received than that of many who spend years in repentance, since the repentance of the latter is not as earnest as hers."

F. Regarding Blessed Paul the Simple, the Disciple of St. Anthony the Great

1. The Fathers relate the following characteristic incident from the life of the Blessed Paul. Paul the Simple once went to the monastery to visit and to benefit the brothers. After greeting them, he went with them to the Church for the devotional service. He stood at the door and looked into the face of each person entering, in order thus to see the state of soul with which each entered into the Church, since he had received from God this gift also: namely, to see the condition of a person's soul with the ease and facility that we look on the faces of our fellow men. And he saw that all who entered into the Church did so with joyful and shining countenances, their Guardian Angels rejoicing with them. And so the simple Paul, too, after this spiritual vision, rejoiced together with those who had entered the Church, and he thanked God for the good condition of the monks' souls.

But a moment later, he saw someone enter who had a dark face and a gloominess about his body; roundabout, demons clutched tightly to him and led him along by a bridle with which they had bound him. His Guardian Angel followed along at a distance, melancholy and sad. Upon seeing all of this, the Elder became tearful and, standing at the front of the Church beating his breast with his hand, he wept with sorrow for the brother whom he saw in this condition.

The brothers of the monastery, as soon as they saw this abrupt change in the simple Paul—his spiritual torment and his moving contrition—drew near him and insistently asked him to tell them the reason for his change, asking him at the same time to enter into the Church with them for the service.

The Blessed Paul drew away from them and remained outside the Church, lamenting at the sorry state of the brother.

When the service had finished, the brothers began once again to exit

from the Church. And the Blessed Paul, as before, observed carefully all of those coming out, wishing to see in what state of soul they were exiting.

Among them, he also saw the man whom he had earlier seen go in with a dark face and a gloominess about his body, surrounded by demons, coming out of the Church, now, with a shining countenance and his body all whitened. The demons, which before had surrounded him, now followed from far off, while his Guardian Angel the Elder saw following close by, rejoicing at the man's transformation.

On seeing this unexpected sight, he jumped with excitement. He cried out with joy and blessed God, saying: "Oh, how boundless is God's goodness and His love for mankind!" Running up to a high spot, he—addressing himself to all—shouted enthusiastically: "Come and behold the works of God, which are so awesome and so marvellous."

At the voice of the holy Paul, all rushed over with interest to hear the words of this saintly ascetic. Before those who had gathered, then, the holy Paul related in a detailed description all that he had seen during the entrance and exit of the brother. Afterwards, he called the brother to attest, before all, to the transformation in his soul.

"I," he said, "am a sinful man, and up to now I have lived a life of immorality and depravity. When shortly ago I entered into the Holy House of God, however, I heard the Prophet Isaiah, or perhaps God Himself, speaking through the Prophet, say: 'Wash and be made clean; put away evil deeds from your heart and learn to do good before me; and then, I, though your sins be as scarlet (from evil desires and passions), will make your conscience white like the snow; and if ye be willing and hear me, ye shall eat the good things of the earth' [*cf.* Isaiah 1:16-20]."

"Having heard this," the brother continued, "I suffered profound contrition, through the goodness of God, and sighing from the depths of my heart, I said to God: 'Master, Lord our God, Who camest into the world to save sinners, I entreat Thee: that which I have just heard promised to sinners through the words of Thy Prophet—extend it also to me, a sinner and unworthy man. And I will give to Thee, Who art a God Who knoweth the hearts of men, a promise that I will abandon every unlawful and shameful deed to which I have been enslaved; indeed, with Thy help and Grace, I shall not commit other sins, but will serve Thee, O God Who lovest mankind, with all my strength.' So, with these thoughts and resolutions, I went out of the Church, determined to hold to them, with the help of Grace from on high and with corresponding

works."

2. An Elder said: "Precisely as tin, when it discolors, becomes bright again when cleaned, such are they that believe and who, though they be darkened by sins, become once more bright through repentance and confession. It is for just this reason that faith can be compared to tin."

G. From St. Ephraim

Take care, my brothers and sisters, for the Evil One wars against spiritual strugglers in sundry ways. He works against man with unimaginably hypocritical cleverness. Thus, before a sin is committed, the Enemy diminishes its significance in the eye of strugglers. More than any other sin, he puts before them the desire for fleshly pleasure as such a small thing that, prior to succumbing to it, it appears as insignificant to the conscience of a brother or sister as throwing a glass of cold water on the ground. When, however, the fleshly desire is fulfilled, then the Evil One greatly puffs up the sin in the conscience of the sinner, kindling in his soul numberless thoughts of despair, like black waves from Hell, so that the brother's good thoughts of repentance are submerged and he is hurled into the depths of hopelessness.

Seeing from the foregoing, my brothers and sisters, the machinations of the Enemy, take care not to be duped in some misdeed, persisting in it and despairing of your salvation; rather, after rising from your fall, return to the Lord your God. And be confident that He will have compassion on you, for our Lord is tender-hearted and full of compassion, rich in mercy and long-suffering, and He does not punish those who sincerely repent, but immediately greets them with joy.

Therefore, when the Enemy of your soul whispers, "You have lost all, you cannot be saved," answer him: "I do not despair of my salvation, for I have a compassionate and long-suffering God. And this conviction upholds me in my belief that He Who commanded that we forgive our fellow man for his transgressions against us even seven times seventy—that He, by the same token, will forgive the sins of all who with their whole souls turn to Him." With such reflections and with the Grace of God, most assuredly all warfare with Satan will depart from you.

H. From Abba Isaiah

If you have truly disavowed the world and dedicated yourself to God through repentance, do not let your conscience trouble you over your past sins, as though they were not forgiven; neither ignore the fulfillment of the commandments of the Lord, for then not even one of your past sins will be forgiven. Beware, my brother, of the spirit which brings sorrow to man, for many are his ruses to entrap you, so that you might be overcome by weakness.

Sorrow according to God is, by virtue of the joy which it contains, something which enhances your outlook, so that you see yourself residing in the Will of God. He who whispers to you, "Where can you flee to be saved? There is no repentance for you"—he is an enemy and does all that he can to succeed in forcing man to lose control. Sorrow according to God does not assail man, but says to him with sweetness: "Be not afraid; come once more, resume your toil for virtue." Knowing man to be weak, this sorrow strengthens him.

Confront your thoughts with a prudent and fearless heart, having no fear of them, and thus your thoughts will become lighter, for he who fears his thoughts is rendered powerless by their weight. This is the power of those who wish to attain to the virtues; namely, that should they, as men, fall to misdeeds, they do not lose courage, but see to it that, through repentance, they correct themselves. Indeed, the goodness and long-suffering of God consist of this: that should a man turn from his sin, whatever the hour, God will receive him with joy and his past sins will be of no account, as we note in the parable of the Prodigal Son (St. Luke 15:11-32). In this parable, as we know, we are given a typical image of repentance: thus the prodigal, having repented, turned from the food of swine—his fleshly desires—and humbly returned to his father. Because of this, his father received him and ordered immediately that he be given the robe of innocence and the promise of adoption which the Holy Spirit bestows.

Let us not forget that our Master is merciful and wishes to return man to repentance, as He said Himself in the Holy Gospel: "Truly I say unto you, that joy shall be in Heaven even over one sinner that repenteth" (St. Luke 15:7).

Seeing that we have at our disposal, then, His infinite mercy and the richness of His compassion, let us turn to Him with all of our heart, and He will receive us in His love of mankind and will make us partakers of eternal life. Turning thus to God through repentance, search your heart, lest you should fall to indifference thinking, "How can I, a sinful man, hold to all of the virtues?"

To be sure, such repentance does not demand these virtues of the repentant; for when a repentant man turns to God, abandoning his sins, immediately his repentance (like a mother) gives him rebirth and, as though he were a baby, supplies him milk from its holy breasts and nurses him, as a loving mother would her child. As long as the baby remains in the embrace of its mother, at every moment it is protected from the danger of evil. And when the baby cries, the mother lovingly offers it her breast; after that, if the baby continues to be cantankerous, she lightly spanks it, according to its tolerance of such, in order to push it to accept her milk and so that it does not have an unruly heart. If, however, the baby then continues to cry, the mother becomes upset and deeply grieves for her baby, since it comes forth from her very innards; she bounces the baby, she kisses it, and she cajoles it in every way, until it accepts her breast to suckle.

If this little baby is presented with gold, silver, pearls, or any other object of this material world, he looks at these things with an innocent curiosity; but in his mother's embrace, he is indifferent to everything, in order to taste of the maternal breast. The father does not punish the baby because he does not work or because he does not go to war against his enemies, for he knows that the baby is small and has no strength: though the baby has legs, they cannot support him to walk, and though he has hands, they cannot hold the weapons of war. So, the parents of the baby are tolerant with him, until he matures.

Now, when this young baby matures a little and becomes a child, if he happens to wish to fight with someone else and, during the match, this other person knocks the child down, the father does not, for this reason, become angry with his child, since he knows that he is still young. But when the child later comes into manhood, his worth is made manifest when he makes his father's enemies his own (and confronts them). Only then does the father entrust all that he has to his child, since his child has proved fit.

If, however, this child, for whom the parents have expended so many efforts, becomes, when he grows up, a profligate and, hating his parents and showing no gratitude for their generosity, becomes a friend of their enemies, even his parents will cease to love him as their offspring and will throw him from their home and disinherit him.

So let us, my brothers and sisters, take care to remain under the protection of repentance and to accept milk from her holy breasts, that we might be nourished (and be made holy and virtuous).

Let us bear the light yoke of repentance, which will instruct us, until,

by the Grace from above, we are reborn and strengthened in the Will of God, becoming "a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

I. From Abba Mark

A mortal sin is that sin for which a person does not repent. No one is so good and so merciful as God. Yet a man who remains obstinately in sin and will not repent—not even God forgives him. We are deeply sorry when we sin; nevertheless, we gladly embrace every excuse and occasion for sins.

J. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Through the works of the Devil, a brother who lived in a small monastic house regularly fell to concupiscence; nonetheless, he forced himself not to put aside his monastic habit. After finishing his services and his rule of prayer, he would entreat God with groans: "My Lord, whether I wish it or not, save me, for I, mud that I am, crave for the stench of sin; but Thou, as God All-Powerful, art able to prevent me from sinning. For, if Thou hast mercy on the righteous, this is nothing of note; and if Thou, by the same token, savest the pure, this is nothing admirable; these, by virtue of the measure of their struggle and virtue, are worthy to enjoy thy goodness.

"Master, let Thy mercies do their miracle, and show to me Thy endless love of man; for the poor man has entrusted himself unto Thee (Psalm 9:35), that is, he who has been deprived of all the virtues." These and similar things the brother said each day, his eyes filled with tears, whether he had happened to sin or not.

Anyway, one night, according to his habit, he fell into the loathsome sin of immorality; but immediately at midnight he got up to fulfill his rule of prayer. The Devil, who had led the brother into sin, would literally go mad at the hope that the sinful brother held out for his salvation and his effrontery, as the Devil saw it, to place himself before God by his prayers. So it was that, this time, he decided to appear visibly before the brother, telling him: "You wretch! How do you not become red with shame in standing before God? How do you dare to bring the name of God to your lips? You are so brazen that you dare even chant."

To these words of the Devil, the brother answered: "This cell is a forge: you give a hit with the hammer and receive one; thus I will con-

tinue to fight against you until death and wherever I may be on the last day of my life. So take heed: Grounding my courage in the limitless goodness of God, I tell you on my oath—and assure you—that, in the name of Him Who came to call sinners to repentance and to save them, I will not cease to pray to God in defiance of you, until you cease to war against me. And we shall see who will win: you or God."

Hearing these decisive words, the Devil said to the brother: "All right, from now I will not war against you, so that I am not responsible for your gaining the victor's crown for your patience." From that moment, the Enemy departed from the brother's presence.

And the brother, who had been so assaulted up to that time, came to contrition and thereafter sat and wept unceasingly for his sins.

Often he thought to himself: "You do good in weeping." But he would respond to this thought: "Away with such good; for whether He saves a man's soul or not, it is not God's desire that any man, having spotted his soul in all kinds of disgraceful deeds, should then merely sit and lament for this waste [but that he should actively repent—*Trans.*]."

2. A brother once lived in the skete together with Abba Paphnoutios. This brother battled with thoughts of debauchery and would often say, under the influence of passion: "Not even with ten women would I be able to satisfy my desire." But the Elder would entreat him and say: "Do not think this way; this is a test and it will pass." However, the brother did not heed this valuable advice, but eventually went into Egypt and took a woman, in keeping with his desire.

After a numbers of years, the Elder went up to Egypt from the skete and encountered the fallen brother, who was carrying a basket of potsherds. But such was his wretchedness that the Elder did not recognize him immediately.

The fallen brother approached the Elder and said to him:

"Elder, I am the one who was your disciple at the skete."

On recognizing the brother and seeing to what wretchedness he had fallen, the Elder broke into tears and with grief said:

"My child, why did you leave the honor with which you were adorned and come here to fall to such wretchedness and dishonor? Anyway, did you take the ten women, as you said, in order to satisfy your passions?"

The brother sighed deeply and with his eyes wet with tears answered:

"Father, I took only one woman to satisfy my physical weakness, and I toil laboriously just to keep her in bread."

The Elder said to him tenderly:

"Return with me, my child."

"Abba, is there a chance to repent?" the brother asked in agony.

"Of course there is," the Elder answered the brother encouragingly.

With these words of hope, the fallen brother abandoned everything and followed the Elder into the desert. As soon as they came to the skete, on account of the experience gained from his sinful deeds, he evolved into a spiritually combative and good monk.

3. A brother posed the following question to an Elder:

"Father, if someone happens to fall to some temptation, such as immorality, through the work of the Devil, what happens to those who become scandalized at seeing this fall to temptation?"

The Elder, rather than directly answer, related the following: There once lived a renowned Deacon in a cœnobitic monastery in Egypt. During this time, a man from the city, who was banished by the ruler for his political convictions, fled to this monastery with his whole family, so as to be safe from his persecutors.

Under the influence of the Devil, the Deacon fell into sin with one of the women among those who had come with the man from the city. When the sin became public, everyone was shocked with disgust.

The Deacon went away to an Elder much loved by him and confessed the incident to him. At the back of his cell, the Elder had a crypt, a fact known to the Deacon also. Repenting for his sin, therefore, the Deacon asked the Elder to let him go into the crypt and to be literally entombed there, without anyone—save for the Elder alone—knowing this fact. Indeed, the Elder consented and gave the place to the brother.

The Deacon thus moved into this dark place and repented sincerely before God, grieving unceasingly and taking nothing else as food, except for a little water and a little bread, which the Elder from time to time provided for him.

During the period of time in which the Deacon was subjecting himself to this harsh practice of repentance, the water level of the [Nile] river had not risen at the appointed flood period, so that the whole area [of Egypt—*Trans.*] was in danger of drying up completely. To ward off the danger of drought, therefore, everyone offered up supplications and continually entreated God with faith to hold off disaster. Then the following was revealed to one of the holy men: "Unless you go to ask such

and such a Deacon, who is hidden in the cell of a certain monk, to pray to God, the level of the river's waters will not rise."

This holy man, having received this information, revealed it to everyone. And those who heard this message marvelled, and all together they went to the cell of the monk, called forth the Deacon from his dark crypt, and imposed on him to pray to God, so as to save the place from drought. And no sooner had the Deacon prayed, than immediately the level of the river's waters rose.

This miracle was an indication that God had accepted the Deacon's repentance, and thus all who had earlier been scandalized were now more greatly benefited by his repentance and glorified God.

4. A brother was beset by the demon of lust. It so happened that the brother once passed by a village in Egypt and saw a beautiful woman, who was the daughter of a pagan priest. On seeing her, he was wildly aroused and, under the influence of his passions, went to the father of the girl and said:

"Give me your daughter as my wife."

"I cannot give her to you," the pagan priest answered, "without asking my god. Wait a bit."

Indeed, the pagan priest went to his god's oracle (through which, as we know, the Devil speaks) and asked:

"A monk came to my home and wants my daughter as his wife. Shall I give her to him?"

The demon hidden in the oracle answered him:

"Ask him if he will deny his God, his Baptism, and the vows which he made as a monk."

When the pagan priest returned, he said to the monk: "Will you deny your God, your Baptism, and your monastic vocation?" Indeed, the monk accepted his terms. But immediately he saw something bright come from his mouth and, like a dove, go up to the heavens.

Right away the pagan priest ran to the demon and said: "Behold, the monk did all that you asked." Then the demon said to him:

"Do not give your daughter to him as a wife, for his God has not departed from him, but is still helping him." So once again the pagan priest went to the monk and told him:

"I cannot give you my daughter as a wife, since your God continues to remain near you and help you."

On hearing this response, the monk was deeply moved and said within himself: "Even though God in His singular goodness has be-

stowed upon me so many good things, I—wretch that I am—have denied Him, His holy Baptism, and my monastic vows. But despite my denial, God has not departed from me, though I have so greatly betrayed Him, and continues to help me. After that, do I not have a duty to run to Him, grounded in the surety of His boundless goodness?"

Having now recovered from the dizziness of passion, the brother left immediately for the desert and went to his Elder, to whom he confessed his denial, as well as all of his thoughts.

With kindness, the Elder told him:

"Brother, remain with me in my cave and fast two days at a time for three weeks: that is, you can fast strenuously for two days and on the third relax the fast. And I will ask God to forgive you."

The Elder did indeed grieve for the brother and entreated God with earnestness: "My God," he would say, "give me the soul of this monk and receive his repentance."

God, merciful as He is, heard the sincere and fervent prayer of the Elder, especially since it came forth from genuine love.

When the first week of the cloistered monk's penance had been fulfilled, the Elder visited him and told him:

"Have you perhaps beheld something?"

"Yes," the monk answered, "I saw a dove high in the heavens in front of my head."

The Elder said to the repentant monk:

"Take care for yourself and ask God with the whole of your soul, without cessation, to forgive you." With these recommendations the Elder once again departed.

As soon as the second week had passed, the Elder came again to the cave where the monk was cloistered:

"So, how is it going, Brother? Perhaps you have again seen something?" he asked with fatherly concern and care.

"Yes, Elder. I saw the dove next to my head."

The Elder, having advised him anew to pray with earnestness and to stay in a state of vigilance in his soul, took leave.

When, at last, the third week had elapsed, the Elder went to the cloistered monk and said to him:

"Have you seen anything more?"

With joy, the monk answered:

"I saw the dove come and perch on my head. Then, when I stretched out my hand with joy to grab him, he flew into my mouth."

When the Elder heard this answer, he thanked God and said to the

repentant monk:

"Do you see, my brother? God has accepted your repentance. Therefore, be careful with yourself from now on."

Crying, the emotion-filled brother answered the Elder:

"From now and ever after, Father, I will remain near you, and I shall not leave until I die." And, indeed, the monk remained with the Elder and never left.

5. A monk confessed a thought to a certain Elder, saying:

"Elder, the thought occurs to me that if a monk with many years of asceticism behind him should fall to temptation—say that of immorality—he rises from such a deadly collapse of the soul only with the greatest difficulty and effort, since he has fallen from success to sin; on the other hand, one who only recently left the world, since he is only at the beginning, does not suffer such damage."

The Elder then answered him:

"A monk who falls to temptation resembles a house which has been demolished. When the owner decides to rebuild this house and goes about it wisely, he will find adequate material at hand: that is, the extant trenches for the foundation and the stones and wood that have survived the demolition; and, for this reason, since materials can be found within ready reach, he can more easily and more quickly rebuild the house. But someone who has not even begun to dig a foundation, who has not yet made ready the necessary materials, but has only now begun to supply them—merely with a hope that his house will be finished—most certainly will have difficulties.

"This example, by way of analogy, can be applied to the differences between an older monk and an inexperienced monk. A monk with years of experience in asceticism, should he wish to restore himself after a fall, will find quite a bit of help from the habitual toils of his long time in asceticism: from study, psalmody, his handiwork, and from all the other monastic labors which, by virtue of his length of years at them, he is accustomed to carrying out with ease. And for this reason he can ever so quickly rebuild the house of his soul when it has been razed by sin.

"Contrarily, the inexperienced monk, who has only recently begun to learn the duties of the monastic life cited above and how to practice them, lifts himself up, after a fall, after a much longer time, for at the same time that he is building, he is also gathering materials."

6. A Bishop once lived in a certain city. It so happened that the

Bishop became ill and it was feared that he would die. In the same city, there was also a convent. As soon as the Abbess of the convent was informed that the Bishop was ill, and indeed hopelessly so, she took two nuns with her and went to visit him. During the time that they were visiting, and while the Abbess was talking with the Bishop, one of the nuns, who was seated nearby on the sick man's bed, lightly touched the foot of the Bishop, wishing to determine if he had a fever.

The Bishop, however, was troubled by fleshly temptations at this nearness and, under the influence of the passions, when his visitors were making ready to leave, he said to the Abbess:

"I beg you, Eldress, since I have no one to take care of me, leave this sister to serve me until I have recovered."

The Abbess, without imagining anything evil of it, complied with the request of the Bishop and left the nun about whom he had entertained evil thoughts. The Bishop was thus greatly reinforced in his sinful desires by the Devil, and was thus ready to acquiesce to his attack of evil thoughts. He went ahead and fell into sin with the nun, who soon began to carry within her the fruits of their sin.

Within a few months, the course of her pregnancy became obvious to all who saw the nun. And the clergy, seeking to know who had fallen into sin with the nun, went to see her and said:

"Tell us who made you pregnant?"

The nun would not, however, under any circumstances reveal who it was who was guilty—that is, the Bishop. While the clergy were pressing her to reveal the guilty party, the Bishop spoke up and said:

"Leave her alone, because I am the one who fell into sin with her."

After this revelation, he got up from his bed, where he had lain ill, and went to the Church. There, broken in spirit, he placed his *Omophorion* [episcopal stole—*Trans.*] on the Altar and, leaving the Church, took his walking stick and set off for a monastery where no one knew who he was. While this Bishop was on his way to the monastery, the Abbot of the monastery, wise man that he was, received a revelation from God that in a short time a Bishop was to arrive. So, he called the gatekeeper and commanded him as follows:

"Be on the watch, Brother," he told him, "for a Bishop is coming to our monastery. Don't forget to meet him in accordance with his rank." The doorkeeper, after this order, expected the Bishop to arrive at the monastery in a fancy carriage and with his entourage, as is the custom of Bishops. For this reason, he gave no heed whatever when, one day, a humble and undistinguished man on foot arrived at the monastery. He

did not know who the visitor was and went to the Superior to inform him.

The Abbot immediately realized that this undistinguished visitor was the Bishop whom he expected and straightaway went to meet him. As soon as he had kissed his hand, in the prescribed sign of respect towards such a Church dignitary, he said:

"Welcome to our monastery, Lord Bishop."

The Bishop was startled and astonished how someone wholly unknown to him could recognize him. So, he immediately thought of departing for another monastery. But the Abbot—through his gift of foreknowledge—knowing the sin of the Bishop, as well as his sincere intent to repent, said to the Bishop with brotherly love:

"Wherever you go, I will go with you, to make known your rank." Having comforted the Bishop with kindness, the Abbot took him into the monastery. He stayed for some time in the monastery and repented with all of his heart, attaining to eminent achievements of virtue.

After some years, the Bishop died in peace, and God surrounded his death with many miracles, so as to demonstrate to the people the genuineness and sincerity of his repentance.

* A prostitute from the city of Jericho, she aided the Israelite spies who had been sent by Jesus (Joshua) the son of Nave (Nun) to reconnoiter the land into which the people of Israel were to enter (Joshua 2:1-21; 6:17-25).

Hypothesis II

As long as we are in the present life, we must do good here and not delay until the future. For after death we cannot set things aright.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother questioned Abba Poimen:

"Abba," he told him, "there were two men: one a monk, the other a layman. One night, the monk decided to abandon the monastic vocation the next morning. The same day, the layman had decided to become a monk.

"In the meantime, they both died that same night, without being able to realize their intentions. How, then, will they be judged?" And the Elder gave this astonishing answer:

"Elementary! The monk died as a monk and the layman as a layman; for whatever their state at the moment of death, so they departed this world."

2. An Elder said: "One voice should constantly ring in the ears of man: 'Today I may be called home.'"

3. Yet another Elder said: "This generation says not 'today,' but 'tomorrow' [that is, this generation puts off until tomorrow the works of repentance—*Trans.*]."

4. It is said of one Elder that, when his thoughts whispered to him, "Forget today and repent tomorrow," he would snap back and say: "No, I will repent today and leave tomorrow to the Will of God."

5. Another Elder said: "Any evil which is not brought to fruition should not be thought of as an evil deed; but likewise, anything righteous, if not transformed into virtuous acts, must not be so considered."

B. From St. Ephraim

1. Brothers and sisters, the period of time which we have at our dis-

posal for repentance is our life on earth. Indeed, happy and blissful is he who has never once fallen into the nets of the Enemy. If, however, someone who was entangled in the nets of the Enemy has been able to break away from those nets and escape from the captivity of the Devil, he too should consider himself blessed; for, though we live in the flesh, in this way we are saved from the onslaught of the Enemy of our souls, just as a fish escapes from the nets of the fisherman. Because, as we know, if a fish is caught and succeeds in breaking the net and dashing to the depths, he is saved as long as he is in water; but when he is dragged up in the net by the fisherman to dry land, then he can no longer help himself.

The exact same thing happens to us: that is, as long as we live in the present life, we have received from God the authority and power to break the bonds of the evil intentions of the Enemy by ourselves and to cast aside, through repentance, the burden of our sins, being most assuredly brought to salvation and inheriting the Kingdom of God. However, if the fearful command of death falls upon us and the soul leaves the body, and the body is placed deep in the tomb, then we are no longer able to help ourselves, just as a fish, when it is taken out of water, after being caught by the fisherman and safely placed in his fishing basket, cannot in any way be saved.

2. Brother, do not say to yourself that 'today I will commit a sin and tomorrow I will repent,' for you cannot be sure about the next day; concern for the morrow belongs only to God.

C. From Abba Isaac

He who commits a sin a second time in the expectation of repenting of it later—such a one goes before God with the burden of guile; to this kind of trickster, death comes completely unexpectedly, at an unknown moment or hour, and he does not succeed in reaching that day when he had hoped to repent.

Hypothesis III

Concerning how we should repent.

A. From Abba Mark

Should you avoid the sorrows and labors of asceticism and contemptuous humiliations, do not expect to be able to succeed in the work of repentance by other virtues; for vainglory and the avoidance of grievous things, though we think that they help us, in actuality serve sin.

If a man falls to any kind of sin and does not grieve in measure with the wrong which he has committed, he will easily fall again into the same net.

B. From St. Isaac the Syrian

1. Man, with the same means by which you spoiled what is good about you, by the same means you should restore it. Do you owe God gold? He will not accept pearls from you in repayment. That is to say, have you sacrificed your continence? As long as you continue in immorality, God will not accept almsgiving from you, since He wishes from you holiness of body, in that you have violated His commandment (regarding the purity of the body), being conquered by the envy of the Devil. Why try to overcome sleep by vigils? Why fast continuously? You take no benefit from these in treating the passion of incontinence, as long as you persist in cultivating that passion. For every illness, whether of the soul or body, may be cured only by the appropriate medicine.

2. Two brothers according to the flesh left the world in order to live the monastic life. One of them had established himself in the monastic life on the Mount of Olives. One day, his heart was literally red-hot with piercing contrition; so, he immediately went down to Jerusalem and, when he had come to the ruler of the city, confessed to him all of his sins; at the same time, he entreated the ruler, saying to him: "Punish me, as I have broken the law." The ruler, amazed at the contrition and repentance of the man confessing to him, reflected a bit and said to the brother:

"My man, since you have voluntarily confessed and have sincerely repented, I dare not judge you before God has so done; for, indeed, perhaps He has forgiven you."

After this, the brother departed and, on his own, put chains on his body—on his feet and around his neck— and locked himself in his cell. When anyone would happen to visit him and ask, "Who, Abba, put you in these heavy chains?" he would answer: "The ruler."

Anyway, one day, just before his death, an Angel of the Lord went to him and the chains fell away from him. The next day, when the disciple who served him went into the room and saw the monk free from his chains, he asked him with astonishment:

"Who released you from your chains?"

"He Who forgave my sins," the monk answered, adding: "Yesterday an Angel of the Lord appeared to me and said: 'Owing to the patience which you have shown, all of your sins are forgiven.' And then he touched my chains with his finger and they fell off me immediately." No sooner had the monk recounted this incident than he fell into the sleep of eternity.

3. Another brother lived alone in the Lavra of Monidia [in the Egyptian desert—*Trans.*] and unceasingly offered this prayer to God: "Lord, since I have no fear of God, send me a thunderbolt, or some punishment, or illness, or a demon, that my hardened soul might revive and come to know the fear of God." At other times, he would again entreat God, saying: "I know, my Master, that I have sinned before Thee greatly and that my wrong deeds are numberless; thus, I dare not ask for Thy forgiveness. But if it be impossible to forgive me, punish me here and not afterwards, in Hell eternal. And if it is possible, give me in the present life a portion of Hell, that my Hell in the other life might be milder. I ask only that Thou wouldest begin my punishment now, O Master, though not with righteous anger or wrath, but with mercy and with clemency."

It is thus that he spent an entire year. During the whole of this time, the monk did not fail to fulfill his work of repentance, entreating God with his whole soul and with fervent tears to forgive him, fasting, holding vigils, submitting his body to various hardships and exhausting his soul through contrition.

Once, while he was sitting on the ground lamenting, as usual, for his sins and moaning grievously and loudly, he became drowsy from his great sadness and fell asleep. Almost immediately, Christ appeared to

him and said, with a voice full of kindness and care:

"What is wrong with you, fellow? Why are you crying so inconsolably?"

The monk recognized Who He was immediately and, terror-stricken with fear and reverence, answered him:

"I fell," the monk answered, trembling.

"Then get up," the manifested Lord answered.

"I cannot, Master, unless Thou givest me Thy hand."

So, the Lord stretched out His hand, grasped the monk, and lifted him up.

When the monk had gotten up and stood before the Lord, Who had raised him, he began again to weep and to be overcome by piercing grief.

Once again the Lord, made manifest in this vision, spoke with a peaceful and sweet voice:

"Why art thou crying, fellow? Why art thou sad?"

Then the brother again said to the Lord:

"Dost Thou not wish for me, Lord, to cry and to be sad since, though I have enjoyed so many good things from Thee, I have nonetheless so saddened Thee?"

With these words, the Lord again stretched out his hand and lightly touched the head of the monk, saying to him:

"Be not further sad, for, since thou hast suffered such sadness for My sake, I shall bear no sadness on thine account. If I have shed My blood for thee, should I not all the more offer up forgiveness to thee and to every soul which has sincerely repented for his sins?"

No sooner had the brother come out of this blessed vision than he felt his heart full of joy. And, indeed, his inner thoughts revealed to him that God had shown compassion on him. The rest of his years, therefore, he lived in great humility, thanking God for the forgiveness of his sins.

4. An Elder said: If you fall to a sin and, having recovered from it, set out to grieve and repent for your fall, take care not to cease showing your grief and to sigh to God until death, since there is the danger that you might otherwise fall again to the same sin. Sorrow according to God is a bridle for the soul which will keep you from falling once more.

5. Abba Daniel says of St. Arsenios that he changed the water in which he boiled palm leaves only once a year. When it would reduce in

volume, only then would he add a little water. As we know, he wove cords from these leaves, working continually until midnight. During this whole period of work, the smell from the stagnant water—which, again, he never changed—was unbearable. The Fathers who would go to his cell to visit would ask him to explain why he did not change the water from the palm leaves, but would tolerate such an unbearable smell.

To this question, Abba Arsenios would give the following answer: "It is necessary for me to endure this stench, rather than the incense and perfume which I enjoyed in my life as a layman."

Let us also, therefore, care for our passions with medicines that are at odds with them. And let us consciously struggle to blot out recollections of the sensual pleasures which we have enjoyed with corresponding hardships.

6. Abba Theodore of Pherme said that a man who is fulfilling a canon of penance is not chained by this canon; that is, one who repents sincerely, should he wish to undertake efforts greater than those assigned him, is not impeded by anything. And just as he should not think the canons to be but one, but as many as have been assigned to the Church by the Holy Spirit, so it is with the particular (canon) given to him.

7. Two monks were beset by the demon of lust and, leaving the place of their ascetic struggles, went to the city and took women. After some time, they repented for this and said to one another:

"What did we gain by abandoning the Angelic state and wallowing in the filth of sensual pleasures, which will occasion us, ultimately, to end up in the eternal fire and to suffer the unending tortures of Hell? Let us return once again to the desert and repent."

Indeed, they went to the desert, confessed their sins, and asked the Fathers to give them a canon of penance. The Elders ordered that these monks remain cloistered for an entire year in their cell and be given, as their food, only bread and water. (Coincidentally, the monks happened to resemble each other in the appearance of their faces.)

When the time assigned for their repentance had elapsed, they left their cell and the Fathers saw them. But curiously, though they resembled each other in their faces and had eaten the same food and had lived under the same conditions, nevertheless one of them looked pale, skeleton-like, and sickly, while the other one was robust and cheerful. The

Fathers were amazed that, while they had eaten the same food and were both cloistered, they now differed so much in appearance.

They thus asked the skeleton-like monk: "What inner conversing did you have with your thoughts, while you remained locked up in your cell for a year?"

He answered:

"I thought continually about the sins which I had committed and about Hell, to which I am bound to go after death. From the fear of eternal punishment, 'my bone hath cleaved to my flesh'" (Psalm 101:6).

And they asked the other monk what he had thought about during one year of seclusion in his cell.

"I," he answered, "thanked God because He did not allow me to die in sin, but retrieved me from the filth of the world and from Hell and brought me once again to this Angelic state. And recalling without cessation the love of God, I rejoiced in spirit."

After these explanations, the Elders said:

"The repentance of both of these two monks has equal merit before God."

Hypothesis IV

That the afflicted should be guided slowly in the works of repentance.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

A brother fell to temptation; that is, to sin. So great was the sorrow that he suffered, that he abandoned his monastic rule. And though he wanted in principle to repent, he was impeded from so doing by his sorrow, saying within himself: "How can I restore myself to what I was before?" Being thus remiss and negligent, he did not have the power to take up his monastic work.

So, he visited an Elder and confessed all that had befallen him.

The Elder, on listening to the matters which were tormenting the monk, related the following example to him in the form of an instructive parable:

"A man," he began by saying, "had a field. On account of his neglect of it, it became fallow and was overrun by weeds and brambles. After some time, this man thought about attending to his field and cultivating it. So, he ordered his son to clean it up. And, indeed, his son went to clean the field; but as soon as he saw that it was full of thorns, he was discouraged and said to himself: 'I would never be able to uproot all that and to clean this field.' So he lay down and went to sleep.

"After a bit, he awakened and, gazing again on the vast number of brambles, became depressed by it all and lay on the ground, sometimes sleeping and sometimes rolling over from one side to the other, the way a door swings on its hinge, as in the proverb: 'As the door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the slothful man upon his bed. The slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth' (Proverbs 26:14-16). He spent several days thusly, without working and inactive.

"In the meantime, his father came along to check what he had done to the field. Finding his son idle and indecisive, he said to him:

"'Why have you done nothing up to now, my child?'

"The son answered:

"'Father, as soon as I started to work and saw this mass of wild weeds and brambles, I lost my desire to work, lay down, and fell asleep.

And so right up to today I have still done nothing.'

"'Do not worry, my son,' the father replied, 'every day you can clear an area the width of your bed, and thus your work will progress without inactivity crushing you.'

"Indeed, the son followed his father's advice, and in a short time he had cleaned the field of brambles and weeds.

"And in this way, my brother, you can work little by little, without risking the danger of being negligent. And God, seeing your desire to work, will restore you to your former rank."

The monk carefully listened to these suggestions, persisted with patience, and applied the directions of the Elder.

And indeed, by the Grace of God, he attained to the peace which he had sought.

Hypothesis V

That we must always call to mind death and the future judgment; for he who does not continually expect death and the future judgment is easily overcome by the passions.

A. From the Life of St. Anthony

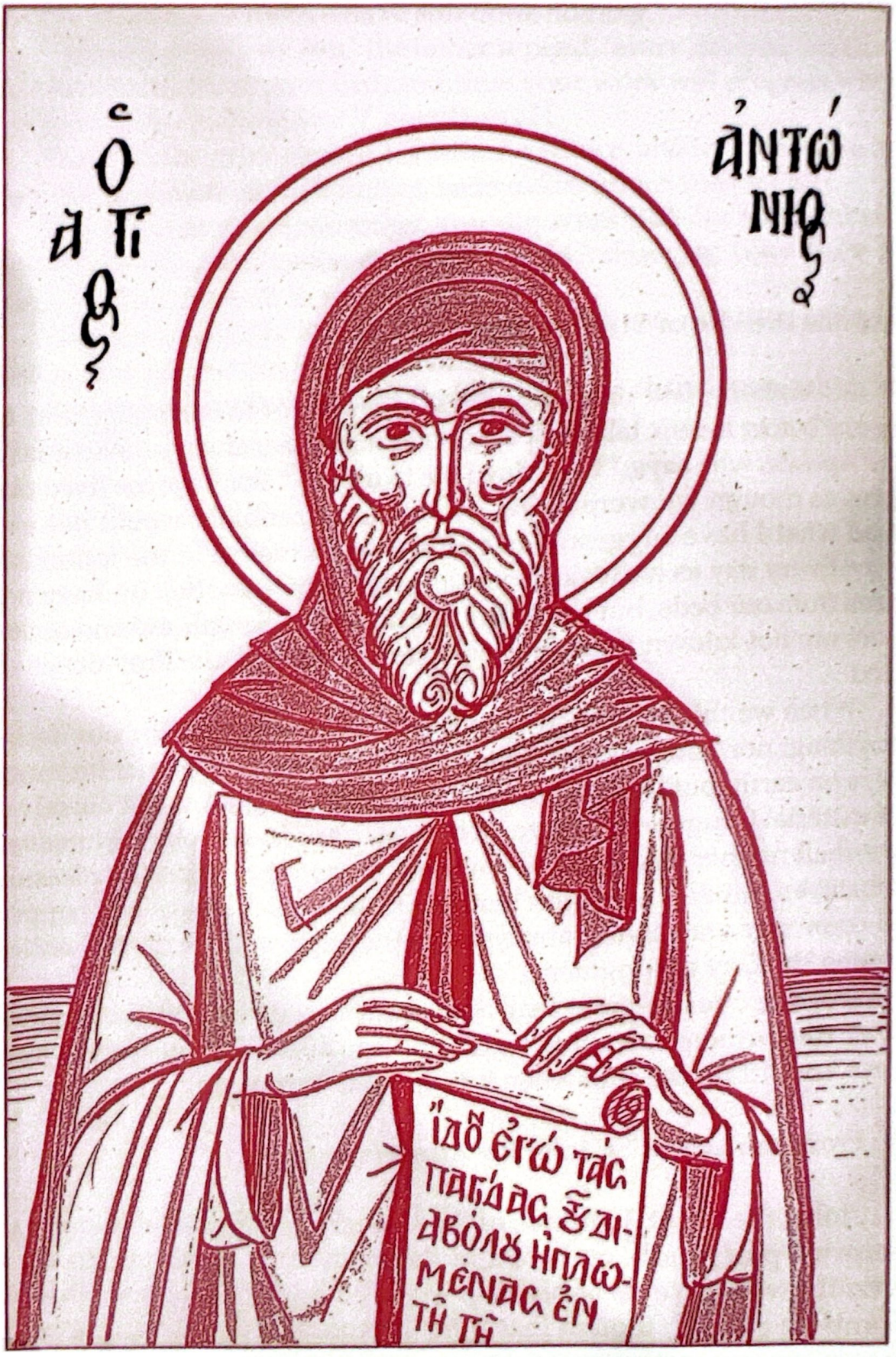
St. Anthony said to his disciples: In order not to be negligent or to retreat before ascetic labors, it is good to remember always the words of the Apostle, who says, "Each day I die to myself." For if we too lived our lives as though we were dying each day, we certainly would not sin. And what I have suggested to you we can actualize in the following way: Every day as we wake from sleep, let us imagine that we have not risen from our beds, but have died; for indeed the length and end of our lives are not known to us, but are counted daily in the Providence of God.

When we think in this way, not only will we neither sin, nor desire anything, nor harbor hate against another, nor gain material treasures here on earth; but, remembering death daily, we shall divest ourselves of material things and forgive all of the faults of our brother. Moreover, we shall neither desire women nor enjoy any other improper pleasure whatever, but will turn with loathing from all such things that happen to come our way, living always with the anguish of death and anticipating the Day of Judgment.

For the ever-so-great fear of approaching death and our anguish over the torments awaiting us for our sins dispel the illusion of pleasures and lift up the soul when it is inclined toward sin.

B. From the Life of St. John the Almsgiver

John the Great, Patriarch of the Church of Alexandria, in order to imprint profoundly on his mind the memory of death and to see it vividly with the eyes of his soul, what did he do? He ordered that his tomb be erected, though that it not be completed, but left half-built. Later, he gave instructions to those who had labored in the construction of his tomb, whenever an official feast took place, to go to the feast and


Ὁ ἅγιος
Ἀντώνιος
ἸΔΟΥ ΕΓΩ ΤΑΣ
ΠΑΓΙΔΑΣ ΤΟΥ ΔΙ-
ΑΒΟΛΟΥ ΗΠΛΩ-
ΜΕΝΑΣ ΕΝ
ΤΗ ΤΗ

St. Anthony

to say loudly in front of all of those gathered: "Your tomb, Master, is still half-finished; so, send us back to finish it, since no one knows at what hour death, like a thief, will unexpectedly arrive."

C. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Agathon said that a monk should at every moment have his mind on the fearful tribunal of God, that is, the Second Coming of Christ.

2. In the environs of the Jordan there lived in those same days an anchorite who had struggled in monasticism many years. Under the protection of God, he had not been affected by the warfare of the Enemy, but had remained almost unbothered by the Devil's warfare. Thus, to those who would visit him, he would, for their spiritual benefit, defy and mock Satan, telling his visitors: "He is nothing. He cannot harm strugglers with anything, save those who, like unto him in their filth, abide unceasingly in sin; these he weakens completely." He said all of these things with surety, since he did not perceive this gift to him of Divine Grace, by which Satan was not permitted to affect him.

Anyway, when the end of his life approached, by the Grace of God the Devil appeared before his eyes and said to him:

"What have I done to you, Abba? Did I perhaps annoy you?"

The Anchorite immediately spat in his face and repeated his usual mocking words; and at the end he added:

"Get behind me, Satan, for you can do nothing to harm the servants of Christ."

"Fine, fine," Satan answered in response. "But do not forget that you have still forty more years to live. So what do you think—that in all those years I will not find time to pull you down?"

With these words, Satan disappeared. In the meantime, however, the seed of evil thoughts was planted in the Anchorite's mind. Therefore, he immediately began to wrestle with his thoughts and to say to himself: "I have endured hardships in this desert for so many years; and yet God has assigned me another forty years still? I will depart, then, for the world to see my relatives and my friends. And after I have lived with them for a few years, I will return to this desert to resume my ascetic life."

Having so reflected, he carried out his plans. He immediately left his cell and set out for the city. However, God, Who loves mankind, did

not wish for the anchorite to throw away his toils; so, before the monk had yet ventured far from his cell, He sent one of His Angels to help him. When they met, the Angel said to him:

"Where are you going, Abba?"

"To the city," the anchorite answered.

"Return to your cell," the Angel said, "and Satan, who has in mind to succeed in duping you, will not further bother you in any way."

The anchorite came to himself at the words of the Angel and returned to his cell. After living three days more, he reposed in the Lord.

3. An ascetic Elder said: "When I am working and I drop the spindle down the whorl, before pulling it up again, I bring death before my eyes." This same Elder also said: "The man who at every moment brings death to mind will succeed in conquering spiritual faint-heartedness."

4. One Elder said that in every work which a man occasions to undertake, he should say to himself: "If God were to visit me at this very moment, what would be?" Take care for the answer that your conscience renders; if it should condemn you for what you have planned to do, turn away immediately and take up the fulfillment of some other thing, and then carry that out with fortitude. For one who works for the good and for virtue must at every moment be ready to walk the eternal path, whether he be found sitting in his cell doing his handiwork or strolling along the street. Therefore you must, whether you are working, or taking a walk, or eating, say to yourself always: "If now, O my soul, God were to call us, what would be?" Pay attention to what your conscience answers and quickly heed that which it makes known to you.

Moreover, should you wish to know if God's mercy has come upon you, again question your conscience, and cease not questioning it until your heart is enlightened by Grace and says to you: "We believe that the mercies of God will help us, happen what may." Watch with care, however, the movements of your heart, lest your conscience speak to you with doubt. Indeed, if there is a shred of disbelief that you stand worthy of the compassion of God, then assuredly you are far distant from His mercy.

5. Abba Arsenios, when his time came to die, began to weep at the moment that death approached. Seeing him weeping, the Brothers and Fathers said to him:

"Even you, Father, fear death?"

"I say to you sincerely," he answered, "the fear which I now feel has never left me since I became a monk." No sooner had he said these words than he reposed.

D. From St. Ephraim

Brother, await your death daily. And prepare yourself for that journey, for the fearful command of death will come at an hour when you will not expect it. Woe to you, then, if you be found unprepared.

Now, if you should happen to be still young, the Enemy may often put into your mind these thoughts: "You are now still young. Enjoy your pleasures —you have time—then repent when you get old. For tell me, I ask you: Do you not know of many who were able to enjoy earthly pleasures and then afterwards, through repentance, reap the heavenly delights? So, why do you wish to destroy your health and body at this young age? There is, indeed, the danger that you might fall ill." To this sly advice of the Enemy you must protest and say to him: "O Destroyer and Enemy of our souls, cease counselling me with such things. For what if death seizes me in my youth and I do not reach old age? Then what defense will I have before the Judgment Seat of Christ? Indeed, every day I see many young people die and many elders live to ripe old age. It is not known to a man when he will be called to pay the common debt of death.

"Thus, if death should seize me, will it then be possible to say to the fearful Judge: 'Death has come to me while I am still young and, therefore, please let me go, so I can repent'?

"Furthermore, I see that God glorifies those who labor for Him from their youth to their old age. For He said to the Prophet Jeremiah: 'I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, in following the Holy One of Israel' (Jeremiah 2:2). While, to the contrary, he who has persisted from his youth to his old age to be guided by unsound and deceitful thoughts the Prophet, though young, sternly censures, saying to him: You that have grown old in evil, now the sins which you have committed earlier have caught up with you. Thus it is that the Holy Spirit blesses those who from their youth have taken upon their shoulders the yoke of Christ, and it is said of them: 'It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth' (Lamentations 3:27). Thus, flee from me, O evil worker and counsellor of lawlessness. May my Lord and God crush your evil schemes and free me, by His power and Grace, from your machinations."

So, have in mind always, my beloved, the day of your death. When it is time to lie down on your bed for the last time and to give your last breath, alas, what fear and terror will surround the soul at that time—especially if his conscience has reason to accuse a dying man.

If a man has done something good in this ephemeral life, if, that is, he has suffered torment and scorn for the sake of the Lord and has carried out all that was pleasing to God, then he is with great joy escorted by the Holy Angels and taken up into the heavens. As a worker who has wearied himself for the whole day awaits quitting time to be paid for his labor and to relax, so precisely do the souls of the righteous await that day.

On the other hand, the souls of sinners are possessed by great fear and terror at that time. For, as the criminal who is arrested by the authorities suffers in agony and trembles while he is led to the court—since he is thinking of the tortures to which he will be subjected—so the souls of the unrighteous fearfully tremble in exactly the same way at that hour, anticipating the unending torture of eternal fire, as well as other boundless punishments. And should the soul say to those who have forcefully seized it, "Release me, that I might repent a bit," no one will any longer pay him heed. Rather, his fearful and relentless escorts will answer him: "When you had time at your disposal you did not repent, and yet now you intend to repent? When the stadium was open for all, you did not wrestle in any of the spiritual matches, yet now when all of the doors have been closed and the time for the matches has passed, you want to enter into combat? Did you not hear what the Lord said, 'Watch, therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come' (St. Matthew 24:42)?"

Think about these and similar things, my beloved, and struggle all of the time to maintain unextinguished the lamp of your soul through works of virtue, until the Bridegroom comes and finds you ready to go with Him to the bridal chamber of the heavens, together with all of the other pure souls who also conducted themselves in the present life in accordance with His Holy Will.

E. From Abba Isaiah

There are three things which a man attains with difficulty; yet these three things help him to preserve all of the virtues in his soul. These three things are the following: sorrow for his sins, tears for his sins, and the ceaseless recollection of death. He who each day thinks of death and

says to himself, "I have only today in this vain world," will never sin before God. Contrarily, he who expects to live many years will fall to numerous sins. God will also clear from the course of his life all sins for one who keeps in mind the dread Great Judgment and who is prepared to account before God for all of his deeds; while he who is indifferent and says to himself, "I have time before I shall come to that hour," dwells together with the diabolical.

Before you begin your daily work, think about the condition of your soul and where it will go when it leaves this corruptible and temporary body; and be not remiss even for one day, with regard to your soul. Take care continually to remember unceasingly the end of your life and to have before your eyes both that end and eternal Hell, as well as those who are tormented and suffer there. Think not of yourself as one alive, but as one of those burning in the flames of eternal Hell.

Woe to us, for whilst before us lies our departure from this world, in which we dwell as transients and temporary residents, we are bound by concerns for worldly and perishable things. But when the moment of the inevitable journey away from this world—that journey of no return—comes to us, then we shall hold sway over not one single thing of all that we have so much cared for. Woe to us, since, though it is certain that we will be held accountable before the fearful Judge for all of the deeds of our earthly life—for gossip, for the evil and unclean thoughts of our souls, and so on—nonetheless we go through the whole of our lives irresponsibly and are inattentive to our souls.

Because of this indifference, there await us the unquenchable flames of Gehenna and the fires of Hell, the sleepless worm, the grinding and gnashing of teeth, and, above all, eternal shame before the Angels, men, and all creation.

Woe to us, since, though we cannot endure the stings and bites of fleas, nits, lice, flies, and mosquitoes, we nonetheless accept, without protest, being wounded all over and bitten by the spiritual dragon, with his death-bearing stings of destruction, being swallowed up like some kind of drink, without thinking of fleeing and without wishing to resist his attacks.

How, since we make no endeavor whatever for our salvation here and now, will we be able to endure the fearful and unending torments of the afterlife?

F. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Evagrios said: "Remember always the eternal judgment and do not forget that you will one day die, being thereby certain that you will not sin."

2. An Elder said: "As you sit in your cell, take care to concentrate your mind on thoughts of your death. Behold how your body, without the soul, will be dead and useless, and contemplate the heartache of the separation of the soul from the body. Take heed well of the vanity which rules this world, and think of the punishments of Hell. Bring to mind what it must be like down there for the souls of those in Hell: in what greatly bitter silence they find themselves, how greatly they fear and tremble and woefully groan, awaiting continually the unending grief and the final judgment of the Second Coming.

"Aside from these things, picture within you, each day, the day of the General Resurrection, when all shall appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Bring to mind that image of the fearful and awesome Tribunal, before which sinners will suffer eternal shame in the presence of God and His chosen Angels, as well as before all men who have lived from the beginning of the world to God's appointed end. Think of how, after this shame, these transgressors will be committed to the insufferable and endless punishments of Hell, the unquenchable fire of Gehenna, the incessant worm, the gnashing of teeth, the outer darkness, Tartarus, and all of the other numberless torments such as await sinners.

"Bring to your mind also an image of the righteous, whose brightness will surpass even that of the sun. Think of how the righteous will rule eternally together with Christ and partake, with Him, of glory beyond words, singing together with the Heavenly Hosts a triumphant hymn to the King of Glory. Behold how these blessed people, who pleased the Lord through their spiritual struggles on the earth, shall enjoy unendingly the heavenly pleasures, living that exceedingly happy life and fearing not in the least that their inexpressible joy of the heavens might be lost or that their wholly delightful pleasure might come to an end. For, as it is said, from that place all pain, every sadness, and all sighing have departed. Thus, the righteous shall have eternal delight, a perpetual feast, and shall possess with assurance all of these good things, without anyone being able to take them away.

"Think on these things continually. Study them ceaselessly and, on the one hand, take heed, as best you can, to flee from the misfortunes that await sinners after death (which we have cited above) and, on the

other hand, to gain the happiness and good things which have been prepared for the righteous. When your mind turns to these thoughts and images, then surely you will avoid any evil thoughts, should your mind be bothered by such."

3. Abba Elias used to say: "There are three things which I always fear: the moment when my soul is to be separated from my body; the moment that I will meet God as my Judge; and the moment that the fearful Judge will issue His condemnatory judgment against me."

4. An ascetic Elder said: "If it were possible, after the General Resurrection of the dead during the Second Coming, for the soul to depart once more from the body, assuredly all men would die from fear and from horrible and terrifying astonishment. For how is it possible for one not to be scared to death at seeing the heavens open up and God appear in wrath and anger, at seeing the innumerable ranks of the Heavenly Powers descending with Him and all men gathered together in the same place?

"So, let us think always about these things and live with the thought that to such a Judge and before such a terrifying Tribunal we will be called to stand to account for our deeds."

5. A very pious and virtuous monk went to Mt. Sinai from a faraway place and established himself in a small cell.

On his first day living there, he found a small piece of wood on which the Father who had lived there before, and who was there no longer, had written: "Moses to Theodore: 'I am present and I am watching.'" Every day he would look at this piece of wood and ask the writer, as though he were before him in his cell: "Come now, fellow! Where are you, now, since you claim that you are present and watching? Indeed, in what place or in what world are you? Where is the hand that wrote these things?" This he did daily, thus remembering death each day and therefore passing his life continuously crying.

This brother's handiwork was calligraphy. Thus he would be given fragments of paper from various neighboring monks, with orders for diverse things, copied from different texts, to be written on them. He died, however, without writing any of these things for anyone. This only had he written on each paper fragment given him: "My Lords and Brothers: 'Forgive me, for I was preoccupied with the small work of another [the small piece of wood and its cryptic message—*Trans.*], and

thus did not have an opportunity to write for you.'"

6. An Elder visited an ascetic who lived in Rhaïthou and said to him:

"Father, often when I send my disciple on some errand I become worried. My worry gets even greater when my disciple is late in returning."

"When I send my attendant out on an errand," the ascetic answered, "I sit at the door and look at the road. When my thoughts make me uneasy and say to me, 'Aha, the brother will never come,' I respond to my thoughts as follows: 'What if another brother—that is, the Lord's Angel—should come to get me and lead me off to the Lord; then what would be? I wonder if I am ready for such a meeting?'

"And so I sit each day and watch the door, weeping for my sins and taking care to correct myself. And while I am crying, I say to myself: 'I wonder which brother will come earlier—the one from earth or the one from Heaven; that is, my disciple or the Lord's Angel?'"

When he heard these things, the ascetic's visitor was calmed and departed. And from that day forth he too applied the ascetic's device in his own life.

7. Another Elder lived in the region of Rhaïthou. Now, he used to occupy himself with the following practice to remind himself of the end of his life.

He would sit pensively in his cell with his face toward the ground, during which time he would shake his head and say with a groan: "I wonder what will become of me?" He would then fall silent and rest a moment, so that he could immediately begin again to do the same thing and to say the same words.

At the same time, he did his handiwork—weaving rope.

In this way, he passed the days of his life, taking care to be ready for the moment of the exit of his soul from his body.

Hypothesis VI

The joy of Heaven is inexpressible, as is the glory which awaits the Saints; therefore, we must remember with our whole souls the joy of Heaven and the glory of the Saints. In all that we accomplish, nothing is equal to that joy and glory.

A. From the Life of St. Synkletike

The Blessed Synkletike said that in this world we find ourselves as though in a *second* maternal womb. When we were in our mother's womb, we did not live as we now live after our birth from the womb, nor did we eat, in that embryonic period, the solid foods which we now enjoy; neither, too, were we able in our mother's womb to work as we now do. And this because, as we know, inside the mother's womb we were far from the light of the sun and not a single ray reached us; and in general, we were deprived of many other earthly enjoyments. For this reason precisely, we cannot enjoy, while living in the present world, the particular magnificent and wondrous delights which are found exclusively in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Since we have come to know the present life in detail, let us in addition remember the things of Heaven, too; having tasted of earthly foods, let us have an appetite now for the Divine; having been satisfied by the ephemeral material light, let us yearn for the Sun of Righteousness. Let us be moved by powerful nostalgia for the Jerusalem on high and let us strive to see it as our mother and homeland. Let us spend the rest of the years of our lives guided by the hope for heavenly blessedness, that we might, therefore, be able to enjoy also the eternal good things.

Just as babies develop slowly inside the mother with limited nutrition and life and then, as more mature organisms, come into full life and enjoy diets of wide variety, so the righteous, since they have been made perfect by the way that they conducted themselves in the world, depart for the heavenly state—"go[ing]," as it is written, "from strength to strength" (Psalm 83:7).

The opposite happens to sinners. They resemble embryos which, though formed normally in the mother, die before they are born, pass-

ing, therefore, from one dark place to another. Precisely so are those sinners who pass their life on earth in the careworn labors of worldly things, literally enslaved by the darkness of worldly concerns. And when they die, unescorted by the treasuries of good works and repentance, they are led forcibly to the darkest Tartarean haunts of Hell.

From the foregoing, then, we can conclude that we are born three times during the period of our lives: *One time only* from our mother, in which instance we come forth from the earthly and proceed into the earthly. In the *other two births* we move from the earthly to the heavenly. Of these two births, *one is that of Grace,* which is realized in Holy Baptism, and we rightly call this "rebirth." And *the other birth is occasioned by repentance and the labors of good and virtuous deeds,* in which we are now being proved.

B. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder said that it should cause no wonder that a man can become an Angel, for we have before us for our enjoyment glory equal to the glory of the Angels. And this glory has been promised to the combatants by Him who established the prize.

2. Abba Hyperechios said that your thoughts should always be on the Kingdom of Heaven, whereupon you will quickly and surely inherit it.

3. Several brothers once asked an Elder to cease the great labors to which he had subjected himself. To this proposal he responded:

"My children, I assure you that Abraham must have repented, on seeing the bounty of heavenly gifts, that he did not struggle more while still alive."

C. From St. Ephraim

My brothers and sisters, the glory which the Saints are to enjoy is great and incomprehensible, while the glory of this life on earth resembles that of a flower, the beauty of which quickly fades, and that of the tender grasses, which so quickly dry up. We see from history how many tyrants and kings conquered vast domains and many cities. Yet in a short time these victories disappeared, as though they had never been. Many such kings, who exercised authority over so many nations, erect-

ed images and memorial columns to immortalize themselves, thinking that by this they would become renowned. Despite all of these things, however, after the death of these kings, others took power who destroyed their memorials and shattered their statues. Some of these invaders, in fact, removed the faces of the former kings from the memorials and had their own likenesses imprinted on them. And the work of these invaders, too, was later destroyed by yet others.

Still others built for themselves splendid and striking tombs, inscribing their names and likenesses on these tombs, thinking that with these things they would make their names eternal.

Along would come the next generation and take these tombs under their control; the people of this generation, wishing to clear away such gravesites, as is natural, would throw away the bones of these kings as though they were pebbles. To what benefit, then, were such precious tombs and pyramids to these glory-seeking kings?

This is not what happens, however, to those who glorify God, for God has honored them with life eternal and unending glory. Just as the light of the sun, the moon, and the stars—even today as from the day that they were created—has not dimmed or waned, but continually maintains the same intensity and radiance, remaining new, flourishing and shining without interruption according to the limits by which the Creator established these bodies in the heavens to rule over the day and night, ...so unending joy and the Kingdom of Heaven the same God has appointed for those who love Him.

And just as God has not been scant in making these physical phenomena, so He shall fulfill His promises with regard to those things expected by men in the future life. And while physical bodies, the heavens and the earth, shall pass away and disappear, the glory of the Saints shall have no end. Let us, therefore, take care to produce worthy fruits of repentance, that we be not shut off from that joy and sent into eternal darkness, where the grief is insufferable. Enter, if you will, into your bedroom and close the doors and windows tightly; block off even every crack through which any light might penetrate; and then sit in the midst of this darkness. You will thus find out for yourself what a fearful torture the darkness can be.

Now, if you suffer so much from the darkness while still here in the world, without pain and other tortures and having the power to go back into the light after a short time, imagine what a fearful Hell that outer darkness is, where there rule weeping and the gnashing of teeth, together with unquenchable fire punishing those sinners assigned, though

only once, yet irrevocably, to these torments.

We should also think of what shame we shall suffer when, before the hells which await us, we see the Saints clothed in all-brilliant raiment, the sparkling beauty of which the human tongue cannot render and which these Saints fashioned with their good works, while we shall look upon ourselves not only naked, but darkened and gloomy and giving off an asphyxiating stench, just as we readied ourselves here on earth with our dark deeds, wastefulness, and sinful enjoyments. Let us weep, therefore, before our Lord and God, that we might fall upon His mercy and compassion.

Our struggle is not waged for money, which if one loses he is able to acquire again. The peril which we confront relates to the soul, which, when we lose it, cannot be recovered, in accordance with the Scriptural passage: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" [St. Matthew 16:26].

And let us think about the soldiers of this world, who, ambitious for the base gifts of their worldly king, risk even death on his behalf. Should we, who have been given such remarkable promises, not all the more, then, not retreat at all from persistent effort in the work of virtue, that we might be saved from future judgment, but rather attain to heavenly good things? Let us remember without ceasing this, too: We cannot withstand the heat of the sun or a severe temperature; how, then, will we withstand the blaze of eternal fire, which burns ceaselessly, though without consuming us in its flames?

And if you will put to the test here and now, my beloved, the acuteness of the senses, you will understand from the material fire of this world the insufferable tortures of Hell. Light your oil lamp and put the end of your finger in the flame; if you can stand the pain, then you will perhaps be able to endure that other flame. If, however, you cannot endure the pain of a small burn, then what shall we do when our whole bodies, along with the soul, will be tossed into that fearful and unquenchable fire?

D. From Abba Isaiah

Keeping constantly in mind the honor which all the Saints have received and the zeal which they demonstrated, you will bit by bit be drawn to the good. At the same time, call to mind the degradation in store for sinners, and your mind will then be safeguarded from things

evil.

E. From St. Maximos

If God, the Word of God the Father, became man and the Son of Man that men might also be made sons of God, we must believe that the goal of this incarnational economy will be realized up there, above all the heavens, where Christ now reigns as the head of the whole body, showing forth on our behalf as a forerunner to the Heavenly Father.

For in that otherworldly and spiritual gathering of the saved and of those made gods by Grace, God will rule in the midst of them, allotting to the saved the merits of heavenly blessedness and being not far removed from those worthy ones.

Some from among the wisest expositors say that the Kingdom of Heaven is the dwelling-place of the worthy in the heavens. Others, again, maintain that the Kingdom of Heaven is to be likened to the Angelic state, which those who are saved shall enjoy; others, finally, are of the opinion that the Kingdom of Heaven is this very Divine beauty of those bearing the image of the heavenly.

I, in any case, think that the three notions of the Kingdom of Heaven described above are in agreement with one another; for the future Grace will be given to all the saved in proportion to the quality and quantity of the deeds of faith and virtue which they have performed in their life on earth.

St. John the Forerunner

Hypothesis VII

Many times the souls of virtuous people are made cheerful at the time of death by some Divine overshadowing, and thus they depart from the body.

A. St. Gregory the Dialogist

1. There once lived in the city of Norcia* a Presbyter, who guided the Church entrusted to him by Divine Providence in the greatest fear of God. Now, this Presbyter, from the time that he was ordained, loved his Presbytera [a Priest's wife—*Trans.*] like a sister; at the same time, he feared her like an enemy, and thus never allowed her to touch him; likewise he completely cut off all relations of a marital kind with her.

Indeed, holy men, together with all of the other good traits which adorn their souls, have also this characteristic: that of abstaining not only from what is unbecoming, but frequently of excluding also from their habitual behaviors many things that are *not* disallowed.

Thus this beloved Presbyter, fearing that he might fall into some lapse with her, did not allow himself to be served by his Presbytera even in those most rudimentary necessities of life.

With such care and vigilance he passed his life, reaching a ripe old age. Then, forty years after his Ordination, he was seized by a high fever and came to his end. When his wife saw that all of his limbs were totally moribund and that death was already approaching, she drew near to his nose to see if she could hear if he was breathing. The moment that the dying Presbyter sensed her touch, even though he was already breathing his last, he gathered all of the strength that he had left and, warmed by the flame of the Holy Spirit which burned in his heart, said to his Presbytera:

"Woman, get away from me, for the fire still lives within me—take away the straw." Frightened, his Presbytera backed away. The Presbyter, feeling a sudden increase in his bodily strength, began to cry out with great joy:

"Welcome my lords, come in my lords! How have you deigned to come to me, your unworthy servant? I am coming. Thank you, thank you."

All of his acquaintances, who had gathered around, heard him repeat these same words and asked him with curiosity:

"What is happening to you?"

He then answered them, amazed that they did not understand what was taking place.

"Do you not see the Divine Apostles who have come here? Do you not see the chief Apostles, the Blessed Peter and the Blessed Paul?"

And suddenly, as though he were addressing the chief Apostles, Peter and Paul, he said:

"All right, I am coming immediately."

With these words, he gave up his soul. Indeed, this pious man had seen the Apostles and it is thus straightforwardly affirmed that he is with them.

It is evident from this incident that the righteous are, by God's love of man, afforded something at the time of their death; it seems that when the righteous draw near to death, they see, by Divine dispensation, visions of various Saints, so that they are not disheartened by fear at their appointed hour of death. To the contrary, when it is revealed to them, in the depths of their souls, with what holy personages they will join together in a short time, they are easily freed, without fear and pain, from the bond of the body.

2. We have learned that this same thing happened to a Bishop, Probus, in the city of Rieti.** Now, when Bishop Probus reached the last days of his life, he was overcome by a grave illness. So, Probus's father, Maximus, sent out a call to doctors from the neighboring areas to help the sick man in any way that they could. In fact, a number of doctors came; but the moment that they took the pulse of the sick man and examined him, they assured those in attendance that death was imminent. In the meantime, time passed and the dinner hour arrived. The ill Bishop, more interested in the comfort of those assisting him than in his own comfort, invited the doctors to go with his aged father to the upper floor of the episcopal residence to eat a little food. And so all went upstairs to have a meal, leaving a virtuous young man to keep the ailing Bishop company. In fact, that young man is still living today.

While the boy was standing by the bed of the sick Bishop, he suddenly saw a number of men dressed in radiant vesture enter into the room. So brilliant was the light of their faces that it surpassed even the brightness of their garments. At the unforeseen appearance of these persons and, moreover, their glittering brilliance, the boy fell to the ground

and began to cry in fear, "Who are these men?" Hearing the boy's cry, Bishop Probus stirred and looked toward the intruders. The moment that he saw them, he immediately recognized them. And filled with joy and gladness, he comforted the youth, who, because of his fear, was crying: "Do not be afraid, my child, have no fear. The Holy Martyrs Juvenal and Eleutherius have come to visit me."

Nevertheless, dizzy from the glittering brilliance of the Martyrs, the boy fled running from the room of the sick Bishop to where the Bishop's father and the doctors were and related to them all that he had seen. They then immediately went down to the sick man's room, finding the Bishop already dead. Evidently the Martyrs that appeared, whose glittering brilliance was such that the young boy could not behold it, had taken the soul of the Bishop with them.

3. It is also needful to make this known: Often when the souls of the elect leave the body, there are heard hymns in the heavens. This happens because of the providential love of God for man, so that these souls might hear hymns during the last pangs of death and not feel their separation from the body.

The incident which I am about to narrate, directly, I remember having related in my sermons on the Holy Gospel. An unfortunate fellow once lived near the portico of the Church of St. Clement. His name was Servulus. This man, whom I think you know, was paralyzed and would beg for alms along the streets. Now, Servulus, though wholly impoverished with regard to material goods, was nonetheless very rich in virtues. His body had been rendered paralyzed by disease for many years. From all that we know of him, he was paralyzed for his entire life and was never able to stand upright on his legs, or sit for awhile on his bed, or even move his hand or foot a bit.

This unfortunate paralyzed man was looked after by his mother and brother. And when he happened to collect a little money through the alms of other Christians, he would give it again as alms through the hands of his mother and brother. Servulus had no education whatever; despite this, however, he had purchased books of Holy Scripture, and whoever visited to keep him company—various pious people—he would persistently prevail upon to read aloud to him from Scripture. In this manner he succeeded, though wholly unlettered, in learning the Holy Scriptures by heart and using them for the benefit of his soul. And so, with spiritual contentment and gallantry, he endured his pain and suffering, hymning and glorifying God, day and night.

When the time came for Servulus' great forbearance to be rewarded by God, for him to depart the temporal for the eternal, the first thing to happen was that the pain in his limbs ceased. And as soon as he saw that death was already upon him, he asked the people whom he had taken in and sheltered to get up from their seats and to chant with him to God, in anticipation of the departure of his soul. Then suddenly, as the dying man was singing with them, he stopped his friends from chanting and said to them in a voice filled with fear: "Quiet! Do you not hear hymns resounding from Heaven?" Having, in the throes of death, thus turned his attention to these hymns, which the ears of his heart vividly heard with delight, his soul was freed from his body. After the departure of his soul from the body, the place was filled with such fragrance that all those present smelled it. From this it is obvious that the departing soul was received in the heavens by those who were heard chanting. At this moving event was present one of our own monks, who is still alive and who, when asked of it, says with tears: "Until we buried the body of that blessed man, this sweet fragrance never left our noses at all."

4. In Rome, there once dwelled a nun named Redempta. Two spiritual daughters lived with her, one of whom was named Romula. The three nuns lived in the same house, poverty-stricken in material goods, but rich in piety and virtue. Romula, however, exceeded her fellow aspirant in asceticism and in deeds of virtue. Distinguished by her noteworthy patience and her perfect obedience, she took care to keep her mouth shut, holding forth as a taciturn struggler in silence and persisting enduringly in prayer.

It is, however, a fact that some, judging from appearances, imagine many people to be perfect; in fact, though, these perfect people may, in the eyes of the Creator, have a certain imperfection. Let us take as an example sculptures. It is often the case that various sculptures have not been well executed by an artist and, yet, those without knowledge of such things will think them perfect. But the artist, however many praises he may hear about his creation, never ceases using his chisel, hitting it with his hammer to make the sculpture ever more beautiful. Something of the kind happened to Romula by the Will of the Creator of all things; namely, she fell ill with some bodily disorder that the doctors called a paralysis, from the effects of which she was left unable to move and remained confined to her bed. Despite this, the scourges of her illness did not weaken her piety and drag her thoughts into despair;

on the contrary, she gained spiritual strength. To the extent that she was unable, because of her illness, to undertake physical work and bodily asceticism, she became more proficient in piety and prayed without ceasing.

One night she called to her side her Eldress and instructor, Redempta, along with her fellow nun. In the middle of the night, standing there, next to Romula's bed, they saw a wondrous and amazing spectacle. Wholly unexpectedly, a light from Heaven descended and filled every corner of the cell. So blinding was the light, that the Eldress and the sister with her experienced great fear in their hearts and their limbs became frozen, as they later related these things.

While they stood there in amazement, they began to hear a loud noise, as though the cell were filled with a great crowd of people and the doors were being broken down by the great scramble of those coming in. The Eldress and her disciple, because of the exceeding fear which they were experiencing and the blinding brightness of the light, were able to see no one, since they had shut their eyes in fear and were dazzled by the blinding light. But this blinding light was accompanied by a curious and wonderful fragrance, in the scent of which, though they were frightened by the light, the women's souls took gladness.

Romula, seeing that the Eldress and the sister could not stand the blinding brightness of this curious light, and seeing that the Eldress was trembling and in fear, comforted the latter in a sweet voice:

"Do not be afraid, Mother," she said to her. "I am not going to die now."

And while Romula repeated these words of comfort, that curious light, which lingered there, dissipated little by little, though the indescribable fragrance remained. In the meantime two, and then three, days passed, and the scent of that mysterious fragrance, which had filled the cell, remained with equal intensity. Then on the fourth night, Romula called her spiritual Mother to her and asked that she be administered, through Holy Communion, the Body of the Master, that He might accompany her on the eternal journey. She was, of course, given Holy Communion. Then, in the hall, in front of the doors of the cell, two choirs appeared and began to chant.

As her spiritual Mother and her fellow nun later reported, they could distinguish in the chanting of these bodiless entities both men and women singing antiphonally, that is, one time the singing of women, another time that of men. During the time that they were listening to this contrition-filled and ethereal chanting outside the cell, the holy soul of

Romula was freed from the fetters of the flesh. As her blessed soul ascended toward Heaven, at the same time the choirs of those chanting ascended up, so that their chants could still be heard from on high, until they disappeared completely and the voices and fragrance dissipated.

5. Often, also, for the comfort and encouragement of a soul departing from the body, the Lord of Life Himself, the rewarder of our deeds in this earthly life, appears. I am often reminded of this when I relate an incident concerning my aunt, Tharsilla [or Tarsilla, in some sources—*Trans.*] She lived with her two beloved brothers, praying unceasingly and passing her days in seclusion. Reaching to the heights of self-control, she increased astonishingly in holiness. One night, then, my great-grandfather, Felix, former Patriarch of the Church of Rome, appeared to her in a vision and told her with fatherly tenderness:

"Come. I am waiting for you here, in this all-radiant mansion."

Shortly thereafter Tarsila fell ill with a fever and came near to death. In keeping with the prevailing custom when noble men or women fell seriously ill (that many people would go to the home of the dying person in order to comfort the relatives), a great number of men and women had gathered around Tarsila's bed during her last hours.

Suddenly, the half-dead Tarsila lifted her gaze up high to see Jesus coming to her; her soul was possessed by inexpressible joy and, with strength unexplainable in the throes of death, she cried out to her guests: "Go now, go—Jesus is coming."

But as Tarsila was watching Him Who was approaching, Jesus, her holy soul left the body. At the same time, a wonderful and strong fragrance spread all about. It was smelled by everyone and indicated clearly to those present that the Spring of all inexpressible fragrance, the Lord of the Faith, had been there.

When, again according to the prevailing custom of cleaning the bodies of the dead, they undressed her to wash her, they saw that the skin of her knees and elbows had become hard, like the skin of a camel, from her intensive prayer and prostrations. Thereby, her dead body revealed to all the shining deeds which Tarsila's soul had performed when she was still living.

6. Of equal wonder is this, which was related to me by a pious man, Probus, of his sister, Musa. Musa, a young and innocent girl, saw in a vision one night the *Theotokos* and Ever-Virgin Mary, who pointed toward a group of girls who were in her company and whom Musa wanted to

approach, though she dared not. The *Theotokos* asked her if she would like to be with these Virgins and included in their company. When Musa answered that she wished this very much, the *Theotokos* gave her the following command: that she not act as a child or in an inopportune manner, and that she avoid laughter and playthings, knowing surely that, after thirty days, she would be together with the girls whom she had seen in the company of the *Theotokos.*

Indeed, from that time on, the young girl changed all of her habits and behaved properly. The parents of the young girl, who saw that their daughter had completely changed so suddenly, asked her in astonishment what the reason for this transformation was.

The young girl then related to her parents what the *Theotokos* had directed her to do in her vision that night and revealed to them the day, which was about to come up, when she would be in the company of the Virgins whom she had seen.

So, on the twenty-fifth day, the girl fell ill with a fever. And on the thirtieth day, when the time of the departure of her soul from the body was approaching, the child saw the *Theotokos* coming to her once again, accompanied by the young girls whom she had seen the first time, and calling the child to her.

The young girl, her face blushing out of respect and in a peaceful voice, answered:

"Behold, my Lady; behold, my Lady—I am coming."

With those words she gave up her spirit and joined the ranks of the Virgins.

7. I will now relate to you what happened to the most pious Father Stephen. He had reached the heights of poverty and forbearance and occupied himself continually with unceasing prayer. I will cite one event only from his life, so that you may know also his other virtues.

Once he harvested the wheat which he had planted and took it to the threshing house to have it threshed. Aside from this wheat, he had nothing to sustain him and his disciples for that entire year. Some evil man, however—an instrument of the Devil—set fire to the threshing house and all of Father Stephen's wheat was burned. A certain passerby, who happened to see this incident, revealed this to Father Stephen, adding: "Alas, Father Stephen, what a terrible thing has befallen you!"

But Father Stephen, with a peaceful face and unagitated look, answered him: "My brother, woe, rather, to the arsonist who committed this sin and harmed his soul; for what has befallen me?" From this in-

cident you can see to what a degree of indifference to material things his thoughts and mind had attained—how he had lost all that he had, not having any food for an entire year, but nonetheless remained indifferent and unagitated, regretting more, indeed, the harm that the arsonist had inflicted on his own soul than the material loss which Father Stephen himself had suffered.

Now, when Father Stephen came to the last moments of his life and was about to die, many of his neighbors gathered around to assist spiritually his blessed and holy soul, which was shortly to leave the body. They surrounded his bed and attended to his last moments with care. Some of them, after the death of the Saint, say that they saw Angels come, they being unable to utter a word; yet others saw nothing, but were seized by great fear.

Moreover, both those who saw the Angels and those who saw nothing were so frightened that they fled from the room of the dying man, and no one was able to remain there when that holy soul departed. This clearly shows who received the holy soul as it left, since no one could bear to observe its radiant and glorious departure.

8. In addition to all of the foregoing, you should also know this: that the state of the soul is not always manifested at its departure from this world, but is indeed made manifest after death. We see this in the case of the Holy Martyrs, who endured the great cruelty of the unbelievers. Each day since their martyric deaths, they have shone forth in glory and brilliance through the miracles emanating from their dead bones. At other times, again, the opposite happens, and God, the All-Powerful, gives heart through various revelations to those who lose courage before their end, that they will not be fearful at the moment of death.

I will relate an example. There once lived with me in the monastery a young brother named Anthony. Now he, through daily repentance and endless tears, struggled to win the unutterable joy of the heavenly homeland. To this end, he studied passionately and doggedly the Holy Scriptures. In this study he did not seek enrichment with knowledge, but tears of contrition; he studied, that is, to guard his mind, to subjugate the mundane, and to be elevated, through mystical knowledge [contemplation], to the heavenly homeland.

To this radiant struggler a vision was granted: "Make ready. For the Lord has ordered you to leave this world." And when the Monk Anthony replied that he was not ready for this journey, he heard a mysterious voice say: "If you maintain that you are not ready on account of

your sins, know that your sins have been forgiven you." The Monk Anthony, at hearing this, fell to great fear and cowardice. Then the next night, he was informed of the same thing and told the same words. After five days, he succumbed to a fever and, while all of the brothers were weeping—since they would be separated from this elect and good brother—and praying, the soul of Father Anthony departed with joy to the Lord.

9. In the same monastery there lived yet another brother named Merulus. Father Merulus passed the days of his earthly exile with profuse tears and with charity. Prayer was never absent from his lips, except during the hours of sleep and eating. It was revealed to him in a vision one night that a crown of white flowers was being brought from Heaven to be placed on his head. Following this revelatory vision, Merulus became ill and, after a short time, with spiritual joy and without any suffering whatever left the worldly realm for the heavenly.

Fourteen years having passed since the death of Father Merulus, the current Abbot of the monastery, Peter, wanted to clean out the grave next to that of Father Merulus. As the Abbot himself tells it, when he began working, there came forth from the tomb of Merulus a fragrance so strong and heavy that it seemed that the most fragrant and sweet-smelling of flowers had been gathered there. It is thus evident from this event that the vision which Father Merulus had seen was true.

B. From the Life of St. Savvas

There once lived an ascetic Elder who was from Bethany and who was called Anthimos. He struggled in asceticism in a cell which he built on the other side of the gulch, to the East, across from Pyrgos, where the Blessed Savvas had built. In this cell he passed thirty whole years; finally, at the end of his life, the Elder became ill and took to his bed from the pain. When the wondrous Savvas saw him in this state, consumed by pain and ripe old age, he ordered that Elder Anthimos be moved to one of the cells in the Church, so that the brothers could visit and attend to him with less difficulty. But, though St. Savvas had ordered this, Elder Anthimos would not agree to this proposal by Savvas and his monks. This is what he answered them:

"I have set my hope in God and I wish to die in the place where I have dwelled in asceticism from the beginning."

Some time after this reply from Anthimos, Savvas got up one night

to do the service of Matins. He thought that he heard hymns, as though many people were chanting. Thinking that what he had heard being offered up was the appointed morning hymns for Matins, he was bewildered, wondering how the Fathers would begin the Matins service without first taking his blessing. Immediately, he ran with haste to the Church. To his surprise, he found the doors of the Church closed; so, he returned to his cell. But once again he heard the former voices chanting with indescribable sweetness. And he recognized the hymn which they were chanting, which was: "...I will go to the place of the wondrous tabernacle, even to the house of God, with the voice of rejoicing and thanksgiving, the sound of those who keep festival" [Psalm 41:5].

Having determined well from where these wondrous hymns were coming, he immediately woke the monk whose obedience it was to play the *talanton**** and ordered him to call together the monks with its rhythmic beats, as is customary.

All the monks being thus gathered, he took several with him and went to the Elder's cell. When they entered the cell, they found no one at all, save the Elder, who had reposed in the Lord. Then, having embraced and kissed him with reverence, and having completed the service appointed for the funeral of a dead monk, they touchingly buried the sacred body of Elder Anthimos.

C. From the Life of St. Daniel the Stylite

It is said of St. Daniel the Stylite that three days before his death, in the middle of the night, all of the Saints of the ages, the Prophets, the Apostles, the Martyrs, and all of the Holy Ones, gathered to meet him. Along with them were also present various Heavenly Powers. This holy throng of succor for those seeking refuge kissed the great Saint and asked that he celebrate the Divine Liturgy, which he did, partaking of the Holy Mysteries himself and then communing all to whom such was meet.

While he was breathing his last, many came to be with the Saint, among them a demonized man, who approached his pillar. This man began screaming loudly about the Saints who had visited St. Daniel, naming each of them separately by name and even affirming that Angels had also visited him. Besides all this, the demoniac added that, at the third hour of the day, St. Daniel would set off with the Lord, while the unclean spirit that had for many years been dwelling in this man would, by the Grace of God, be cast out and flee from him. And, in fact,

both things occurred at the stated time, as the demoniac had predicted.

D. From the *Gerontikon*

The Fathers say the following of the last moments in the life of Abba Sisoes. When Abba Sisoes was about to die, the Fathers were standing near his bed. Suddenly his face began to shine brightly, and he said to them with joy: "Look! Abba Anthony has come." A few moments later, his face still shining, he said: "See, now the choirs of Prophets have come." His face now shined even more brightly. Then, his face shining even still more brightly, he shortly thereafter said, "Ah, now the choirs of the Apostles have arrived." Then he seemed to converse with his invisible guests.

The Elders in attendance entreated him, saying:

"Father, with whom are you speaking?"

He replied: "The Angels have now come to take me, but I am asking them to leave me a bit, that I might repent." The Fathers responded: "Father, you have no need to repent."

And with profound humility St. Sisoes spoke once more: "It seems to me, I assure you, that I have not even made a beginning in the art of repentance."

In the meantime, everyone saw that the end had come. Suddenly the Saint's face began to shine like the sun, and all became frightened. To the astounded Elders Abba Sisoes said: "Do you see? The Lord has come. And He is saying, 'bring to me that chosen vessel of the desert.'"

Forthwith, at these words, he gave up his spirit. At the moment of the departure of his blessed soul, there appeared what seemed to be a flash of lightning, and the Abba's cell was filled with fragrance.

* Nursia (Norcia) is a small city in Central Italy, situated on the River Fredara between L'Aquila and Spoleto; it is about twenty-eight miles away from each of these cities.

** Reate (Rieti) is an ancient city in Italy, located about forty miles northeast of Rome.

*** By the "*talanton*" or "*semantron*" we mean a piece of wood or a metallic object, specially fashioned according to monastic tradition, which, when struck by a hammer or mallet of wood or iron, gives off a sound, in order to awake the monastics from sleep and, later on, to signal them to assemble in Church. It is also struck in the afternoon for Vespers or for a Vigil. The *talanton* is much older than bells, which we have nowadays in the Orthodox Church and which have often replaced it.

Nota Bene. As in the foregoing endnote, explanatory Greek words and phrases from the text, as well as those contained in translators' addenda, have been transliterated in the classical style. At the discretion of the individual translator, the original Greek word or phrase may or may not be reproduced in Greek letters, as well—*Editors.*

Hypothesis VIII

Regarding those who die and come to life again, and how this happens by Divine Providence. And how many times sinners while still alive, beholding the torments of Hell and the demons, shudder with fear; and in this state of fear, their souls depart the body.

A. St. Gregory the Dialogist

Question from Peter

How can one explain the phenomenon which occurs with many who appear, by some delusion, to be separated from their bodies and are thought momentarily to be dead, as though without a soul, but who come back to life?

St. Gregory's Answer

This phenomenon, if one understands it well, is not a delusion, but a Divine admonition to man: for this phenomenon God in His compassion renders by Providence, offering it forth as the greatest gift of mercy, so that some, after the departure of the soul from the body, come back into their dead bodies, having seen for themselves, with the eyes of their souls, the torments of Hell, in which they did not believe when they heard of them from others; they thus come to stand in fear thereof.

There once lived a monk named Peter. This monk was the disciple of an Elder, Evasa [the Greek text has confused the Elder, who is not named in the original Latin, with the place where he resided: Evasa or Ebusus (modern-day Ibiza, or Eivissa in Catalan), one of the Balearic Islands off the coast of Spain—*Editors*] who lived the ascetic life in a secluded, wooded place. The Elder told a story to his disciple, Peter, about how, before settling in that secluded place, he fell ill and died. Immediately, however, his soul returned to his body and, when he had come to, he swore that he had seen the torments of Hell and its immeasurable burning chambers and that, indeed, he had seen suspended in that fire many of the rulers of this world. Moreover, just as he was being led

away to be thrown into that place of torture and fire, a white-winged Angel had appeared and, preventing him from being cast into the fire, said to him: "Go and take heed; and henceforth you must take great care in how you live."

After these words, the cold members of his dead body began to warm and, when he had completely awakened from the sleep of eternal death, he related to all those around him what had happened to him. Thereafter, he gave himself over to strict fasts and vigils, being reminded always of the torments which he had seen in Hell—indeed, fearing these torments so greatly that, even if he did not speak thereof with his tongue, he nonetheless preached them by his conduct.

In this way, thanks to the wondrous Providence of God, the Elder experienced a temporary death, so that he would not be condemned to the eternal death of Hell. Though the heart of man is possessed, at times, by such profound darkness, perhaps this demonstration before him of the torments of eternal Hell can bring him to repentance.

Then again, the manifestation of the torments of eternal Hell becomes a source of greater reproach for those indifferent or negligent, who, even after such a ghastly vision, return to life, remaining the same as before, uncorrected; wherefore, there is no longer left for them any justification.

From the Same Saint

B. St. Gregory the Dialogist to his Deacon Peter

That souls often see, while yet in the body, various of the torments of the unclean spirits in Hell, sometimes for their own edification, at other times for the edification of those who hear of them.

1. There once lived a youth by the name of Theodore. He was very unruly and followed his brother, who was in fact a monk, to the monastery out of necessity and not out of any personal inclination or desire to do so. If anyone happened to tell him some good word about his salvation, the young man, since he was very disobedient, was not only little disposed to act on the advice, but would not even hear it; nor, moreover, would he agree to become a monk.

Now, it so happened that this young man developed a sore on his thigh from a deadly disease* and came near to the end of his life. All of the brothers of the monastery gathered near him. Just as they saw him

slowly expire (his body had already become cold and there remained in his bosom only the slightest warmth of life), they began to pray for him persistently and to ask God, Who loves mankind, to have compassion on him at the hour of the departure of his soul from the body.

Suddenly, as the brothers were praying, Theodore began to cry out in a loud voice and interrupt the prayer of the monks, saying: "Get away from me, move away, for I have been handed over for a dragon to devour me. The dragon cannot consume me entirely because of your presence. He already had my head completely inside his mouth. So give way, that I will not be further tortured and so that what he must do, he can do even more quickly. Since this dragon is intent on eating me, why should I suffer a slow martyrdom?"

When they heard these words, the brothers were struck with terror, and they said to the young man:

"Make the sign of the Cross over yourself."

Theodore answered in a heart-rending cry:

"I want to make the sign of the Cross, but I cannot, since the scales from this dragon are weighing down my hand."

After this response—though Theodore became inanimate—the monks knelt down on the ground and began with fervent tears to pray intensely for his redemption from the dreadful dragon.

When a period of persistent prayer and supplication by the brothers had elapsed, suddenly the ill Theodore jolted up and yelled with all the power of his lungs:

"My brothers, give thanks to God, for the dragon which had taken hold of me to devour me has fled and was unable to stay here at all. Now, therefore, I ask that you fervently pray to God that He will forgive me of my sins. After this fearful thing that has happened to me, I am completely ready to repent and to forsake the life of the world."

And, indeed, having come to and having recovered his strength, the young man turned with all of his heart to God and entirely changed his outlook, since he was effectively admonished by the corrective scourge which God had sent him. Having pleased God sufficiently, his soul then departed from his body.

2. Theodore saw the punishment that follows death and was benefited thereby. Others, however, as we noted previously, see the punishments inflicted by the evil spirits after death while they are still alive and recount these for the sake of our spiritual edification, then immediately die after the narration of the fearful things which they saw. As

an illustration of this, I will tell a story.

There once lived a man named Chrysaorius, from among the most notable of this world. To the degree, however, that he added to his wealth, so much more he enriched his passions. Pumped up by vanity, he submitted without resistance to the passions of the flesh, endeavoring to amass many riches and inflamed by the passion of greed.

When, however, the Lord deigned to put an end to the many sins of this man, he allowed Chrysaorius to fall to a life-threatening illness.

Now, when he had come to the last moment of his life, and while his eyes were still wide open, he saw before him frightful and dark-faced spirits, who were there to help escort him to the gates of Hell. He began to tremble and turn pale, and was drenched with perspiration; crying out in desperation, terrified, he pleaded for a little time (in order to repent).

He called with deep and agitated cries for his son Maximus, whom I later knew as a monk when I, too, was a monk, saying: "Maximus of mine, come to me. Never have I done you wrong. Save me now with the strength of your faith."

Thereupon, Maximus, upset and weeping, immediately went to him, along with all those who lived in Chrysaorius' house. Though none of them was able to see the evil spirits which had beset Chrysaorius, they could conclude that they were there from everything that the suffering man was saying and from his pallor and the fear which he showed, since he was turning here and there in his bed from fear of the vexatious spirits and their dark forms. One minute he would turn to the left, only to see in front of him those spirits which he dared not confront; then he would look away toward the wall, only to see them again standing before him.

So, having despaired of any possibility of escaping from them, he began to cry out: "At least give me time until the morning—a little time until the morning." With these cries his soul departed from the body.

In all of this, it is obvious that Chrysaorius saw all of these things not for his own benefit, but for ours, that we might learn, come to fear, and correct our ways. For of what benefit to Chrysaorius was the appearance of evil spirits before his death or the reprieve which he sought, yet did not receive?

3. A similar instance was related to me by the Presbyter serving our brotherhood, Athanasios. In Iconium, from which he also hailed, there was a monastery: the monastery of the "Galatians," as it was called. In

the monastery there lived a certain monk, whom all considered to have attained to a high degree of virtue and seemliness. As his death revealed, however, his life was far removed from the apparent virtues that he showed.

One day, foreseeing that his end was near, he called near him all the brothers of the monastery. The brothers gathered around him with great eagerness, waiting to hear from such a virtuous ascetic, as they reckoned him, something great and wondrous, now that he was dying. Thereupon, he, mourning and trembling from his fear, said:

"You thought that I was fasting with you, when in fact, hidden away from you, I was eating. And now behold: I am delivered to the frightful dragon to be devoured. This frightful dragon has wrapped his tail around my feet and my knees, putting my head in his mouth, while he sucks out and uproots my soul."

Having said this, he immediately died, without having been granted to live even a short time in order, through repentance, to be set free from that dragon. From this incident it becomes wholly obvious that he saw this fearful vision solely for the spiritual benefit of those who were listening, since he, even though he made known to others the Enemy to whom he was delivered up, nonetheless could not escape it.

C. A Story from the Travels of the Apostle Thomas

The great Apostle Thomas was placed by the Lord in the service of a businessman, Abban [Gr., Ἀμβάνης (Ambanes)—*Trans.*], as one very able in the art of construction. Together with the businessman Abban, St. Thomas arrived in the land of India. There he was led before the king of the land. The king asked him, with interest, about his skills, and the Apostle Thomas assured him that he was among the most accomplished builders and demonstrated to him adequately his skills in this art.

Indeed, from all that he said about his art, St. Thomas was reckoned by all those hearing him to be a remarkable architect, for which reason the king entrusted him with a plentiful amount of money to build him a palace in a certain part of his kingdom.

No sooner had the Apostle Thomas received the king's money, plentiful as it was, than he distributed all of it to the poor and to all who were in need.

After a short time, the king sent emissaries to the place which he had indicated that his palace be built, so as to see the construction. He was astonished, however, to learn from his emissaries, when they re-

turned, that Thomas had not even laid the foundations for the building and that all of the money that the king had entrusted to him had been distributed among the poor. The king then became furious and commanded that the Apostle be tied up, hands behind his back, and brought before him.

Quicker than he could say it, the king's command was fulfilled and the Apostle Thomas was brought before him. The king said to him with uncontrollable anger:

"Did you finish my palace?"

"Yes," the Apostle Thomas quietly answered him, "and a very beautiful one."

"All right, then," the king said sternly, "let us go to see it."

"It is not possible in the present life, O king, to see the castle which I am preparing for you. At your departure from this world, however, you will see it, and you will enjoy it with great happiness and rejoicing," the Apostle responded.

These words of the Apostle Thomas, King Gundaphor (that was his name) [Gr., Γουνδαφόρος; (Goundaphoros); also Gundaphorus or Gundafor—*Trans.*] considered deceitful, and did not believe them to be true.

In the meantime, he was told that the Apostle Thomas was poor and had nothing that he could confiscate. Having thus lost any hope that he could get his money back, he decided, under the influence of his rage, that only the death of the Apostle Thomas would satisfy his anger. So, he arranged to have the Apostle skinned alive and afterwards thrown into a fire to be burned.

But He who brings about all things by His omnipotence and calls them into accord with His Divine Will conveniently arranged for a change in the course of events through a fatal blow to Gad [Gr., Γάδ; also, Guda], who was the brother of King Gundaphor. And behold what happened. This Gad was even more upset than his brother the king at St. Thomas' failure to build their palace; and being more greatly infuriated by the Apostle, who had supposedly swindled them, he encouraged the king to proceed with Thomas' punishment. In the interim, however, Gad died.

The death of Gad, however, prompted the postponement of the Apostle Thomas' death. Owing to the magnitude of the calamity of Gad's death, the king forgot about his condemnation of St. Thomas and busied himself with the funeral arrangements for the dead Gad.

But what an astonishing miracle God performed—He Who wishes not the death of a sinner, but that he should turn from his sin and live

the life of virtue.

As soon as Gad died, Angels took his soul and showed him the everlasting abodes that exist in the other world for those who are saved from sin. Gad's soul was so overwhelmed by the beauty, the magnitude, and the extraordinary brightness of one of these heavenly mansions, that he set aside all else and persistently pleaded with his Angelic guides to let him live in just one of the smallest of the rooms in the mansion.

The Angelic guides, however, would not consent to his request, pointing out that the mansion belonged to his brother Gundaphor, and that it had been built by someone from a foreign place by the name of Thomas.

Upon hearing this, Gad began with even greater zeal to implore his Angelic guides to go back and return to the world, so that he could buy this dazzling castle from his brother.

And what should happen thereupon?

At the beckoning of Him Who orders all things, it was appointed that Gad's soul should return to his dead body, not only to save the Apostle from death, but to save many souls with the miracle of the dead Gad's resurrection.

Now, those who were caring for his burial, while wrapping Gad's dead body in funeral linens, suddenly saw the soulless body begin, little by little, to come to life. Amazed, they immediately ran to King Gundaphor to relate to him this unheard-of event.

Astonished, the king hastily ran to the side of his dead brother. And, oh, the wonder! Gad, up to this time dead, opened his lips, which had been sealed by death, and, as though waking up from sleep, insistently began to plead with his brother, saying:

"If you love me, my brother, fulfill my request to buy the beautiful palace which Thomas the Christian has built for you in Heaven."

Carefully listening to these words, the king well understood their meaning and recognized that the Apostle Thomas was in fact an Apostle of God and that the God Whom the Apostle Thomas proclaimed was indeed a true God and a lover of man; forthwith his soul was enlightened with the brilliance of faith, and he answered his brother:

"My brother, I cannot sell you that building, the acquisition of which did not come so easily. Rather, I believe it easier to take the building for myself and to introduce you to the architect who made it—who by Divine Providence is still alive—and he can make a similar castle on your behalf."

Immediately the king commanded that Thomas be brought before

him, who in the meantime was freed from prison and from his fetters. When the Apostle appeared, both of the two brothers fell at his feet and asked forgiveness for the wrong which they had brought upon him—albeit out of ignorance—and asked him to preach in their country the God Whom they knew not and His commandments, that they might live all of their lives in accord with His Will and thus merit the eternal and unseen good things, the images and types of which Gad had, indeed, been deemed worthy to foresee.

The Apostle Thomas heard all of this with amazement and marvelled at the depth of God's Providence; immediately, then, he suitably thanked God and catechized them. Thereafter, he baptized all of them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. He also baptized other numberless throngs of Indians, who came to believe in God on account of the miracle which had taken place.

D. From the *Gerontikon*

Once an ascetic Elder left the desert and went down to a city to sell his handicrafts. Fortuitously, he happened to sit by the door of a neighbor, who was dying. When he sat down, he began to stare intently, seeing a number of dark men whose sight evoked fear, since they were seated on black horses and held in their hands flaming swords. Anyway, these dark men arrived at the door of his neighbor's house. They left their horses there and went into the house. As soon as the sick and dying neighbor saw them, he began to cry out desperately: "Lord have mercy on me and save me."

The dark men then said to him:

"Now, at the setting of the sun, you remember God? Why did you not call for Him in the light of day? There is now for you no hope of salvation or of comfort." Thereupon they hurriedly seized his soul and took leave.

E. From St. Ephraim

My brethren, great is one's fear at the hour of death, since at the moment of the separation of the soul from the body, there appear before the soul all of the works which it did, both day and night, both good and evil, while, at the same time, the Angels hurry to take the soul from the body. Now, the soul of a sinner, seeing its evil deeds, hesitates to depart. Urged by the Angels and trembling from its evil deeds, it implores

them with fear, saying: "Leave me for just one more hour, and afterwards I will leave." But the answer to the soul is given by all of its deeds together—all that the soul has done: "You created us. Together with you, then, we must appear before God." So, trembling and wailing, the soul leaves the body and goes to appear before the Eternal Judge of Divine Justice.

F. From the *Gerontikon*

An ascetic Elder related the following:

A brother once wished to leave the world to become a monk, but was impeded in this by his mother. The brother nonetheless did not forsake his goal and said to his mother: "I wish to save my soul." Since his mother could not by any effort dissuade him and keep him near her, she allowed him to leave. The brother indeed left the world and became a monk, though he passed his life in heedlessness. In the meantime, his mother died.

After some years, the brother became seriously ill and was approaching death. In the midst of his illness, he lost consciousness and his soul left his body and was taken off to be judged. There among the damned he found his mother. On seeing him, she said with astonishment: "My child, are you, too, condemned to this place of the damned? For what reason are you, who said to me, 'I wish to save my soul,' here? The brother, shamed by all that he had heard, was struck with gloom, unable to answer anything his mother had said. Afterwards, he heard a voice that said: "At once. Out of here." He immediately woke from this ecstasy and unconsciousness and related with fear to those around him all that he had seen and heard, glorifying God, Who in every way seeks the salvation of sinners.

When he had recovered from the illness, since he was closed in his cell, he remained in solitude, caring vigilantly for his salvation and repenting and weeping for all that he had previously done so heedlessly and with sloth.

So profound was his contrition, and so abundant his tears, that many who saw him would feel sorry for him and implore him to moderate his labors and ascetic trials some, so that he would not from his lamentation bring some harm to his health. He, however, had no intention of being comforted, responding to all advice as follows: "If I could not endure my mother's derision, how will I be able to withstand the shame, on the Day of Judgment, before Christ, the Holy Angels, and the

whole of creation?"

Let us take care, brethren, and let us struggle to live in accord, not only with the promise which we have made before God, but with the honor shown to us by our relatives and other people, whom we have left for the cause of perfection and to please God. If we live in another way, with heedlessness and sloth (something which I pray does not happen among us), how then shall we endure, at the fearful Tribunal, our shame, not just before the creation above and below, but before our relatives and other acquaintances that we had here on earth—from whom we separated—when we approach God?

Woe to us, then, if being damned by heedlessness and sloth, we will, as well as all the other misfortunes and punishments of Hell, have our relatives and friends to condemn us. They too will deride us, if, as a certain Saint said, even though we have forsaken the joys of the worldly life, we have nonetheless not even succeeded in becoming monks, for which reason we left the world.

* This is a symptom of the bubonic plague—*Trans.*

Hypothesis IX

Proof of where the souls of the dying go and how they exist after their separation from the body.

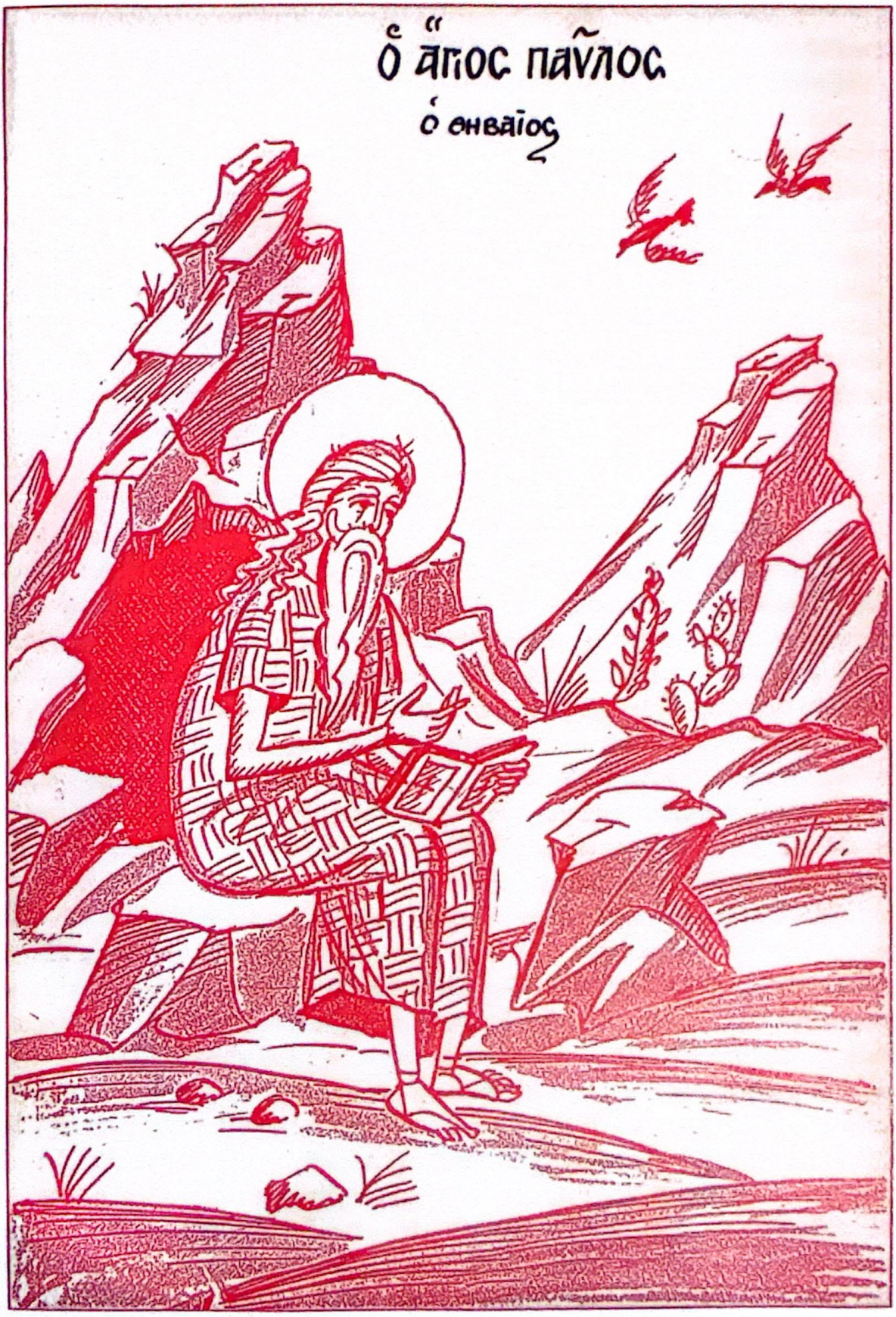
A. From the Life of St. Paul the Thebite

St. Anthony the Great, on his return to St. Paul the Thebite, carrying with him the vestments of St. Athanasios (according to the instructions of the latter), saw, as he traversed the desert and approached the cave of St. Paul, whilst it was the third hour of the day (9 a.m.), with the eyes of his soul—with which only the worthy see—orders of Angels, groups of Apostles, choirs of Prophets, columns of martyrs, and, amidst these sacred ranks, the soul of Paul, surpassing in brightness even the whiteness of snow, shining more brightly than that whiteness, and going up with great joy into the Heavens.

B. From the Life of St. Pachomios

St. Pachomios the Great was once informed that one of the brothers who resided in one of the many monastic communities founded by the Monastery of Chenoboscia [or the "Goose Pastures," in the Thebaid (see the first endnote on p. 129)—*Trans.*], as it was called, had fallen ill and was suffering; and finding himself under the weight of this illness, he asked to enjoy the blessing which St. Pachomios the Great, as an Elder, would give to the monks.

When he was informed of the desire of the sick monk, St. Pachomios, as a man of God, immediately set out to visit him. However, when he was but just a few steps from the place where the sick brother was dwelling, he heard a sacred voice in the air, which was accompanied by wondrous music. St. Pachomios the Great lifted his eyes up towards the Heavens and saw the soul of the brother being led, joyful in its path, to the blessed life by Angels, who were singing. The monks who were with St. Pachomios neither heard the voice nor saw anything of all that which the holy man had observed. Therefore, since they saw him standing for a long time with his gaze directed up toward the East, they said to their Elder:



St. Paul of Thebes

"You have stopped, Father. Let us run, so that we can get there in time."

Then St. Pachomios the Great said to them:

"It is useless to run, my children, for I have been following the soul of the brother all this time, as it was guided to eternal life." The brothers asked Abba Pachomios to tell them about how he saw this blessed soul, and he related to them all that he had seen and heard.

Several of the brothers who were accompanying St. Pachomios ran ahead to the Monastery of Chenoboscia and sought to ascertain more precisely the hour at which the brother had reposed. To their astonishment, they learned that he had reposed at the exact moment that Abba Pachomios saw his soul ascending in glory into the heavens.

C. From the *Gerontikon*

An ascetic Elder related the following:

There once lived an aged nun who excelled in virtue and piety. When I asked her why she had fled from the world, she told me this: "When I was still a young girl, Reverend Father," she began, "I remember that my father was a very tender and good man. He was thin and sickly in body, so that the majority of his time he passed confined to his bed. He was marked by such simplicity that he spoke only when compelled. When he was well, he dedicated himself to tilling the land, thereby occupying himself and bringing to our home the produce which he cultivated. But he was so reticent to speak that those who did not know him thought him to be mute.

"Wholly the opposite of my father was my mother. She was such a busybody and so idle that she was anxious to learn about things even outside our village. She talked so much that nobody ever saw her silent, even for a little; rather, one time she would be seen arguing and quarrelling, and another time saying obscene and indecent words in jest. Most of the years of her life she wasted in drunkenness and in the company of profligate men. She was often away, and was immoral and, like a prostitute, badly looked after our household, so that we could no longer get by—despite the fact that our assets were not few—since it was to her that my father had entrusted the administration of the household. Though she lived in this way, she nonetheless never became sick and never felt the slightest pain; for all of the wretched life that she lived, she maintained her bodily health.

"It happened, anyway, that my father died, ravaged by many years

of illness. Now, what happened at his death? Immediately a fearful wind came up and almost razed the area. There was continual thunder, and the rain poured so violently that no one dared poke his nose out of his house even for a moment. This foul weather lasted three days, and out of necessity we kept my father inside the house, unburied.

"Our fellow villagers, seeing all of these obstacles, greatly condemned my dead father, saying: 'My, my, what evil was living in our midst, and we did not know it! It seems that this dead man must have been an enemy of God, and for this reason God has not even allowed him to be buried yet.'

"We however, so that the corpse would not start decomposing in the house and make it uninhabitable because of the stench, risked, despite the violent rain, transporting the body to the cemetery, and buried it.

"From that time on, my mother had even greater freedom to devote herself with great brazenness to orgies and debauchery. Indeed, she became so audacious that she transformed our home into a house of ill repute and, indulging her unceasing sensual pleasures, squandered away all of our holdings; so in a short time we had nothing left. Some years after the death of my father, my mother died. She had such a splendorous and magnificent funeral that one could say that nature itself cooperated in conducting it.

"Since my mother had died and I had passed the age of childhood, the flames of youth being kindled and tempting me, one evening the thought came to me: 'Which path shall I follow in my life?' Occupied with this thought, I said off the top of my head, talking to myself: 'Should I choose, I wonder, my father's way of life, and live with kindness, modesty, and judiciousness?

"'But my father, even if he did live virtuously, nonetheless never enjoyed even one good thing, but was always devoured by illness and misfortunes. He was so unfortunate that he was not even allowed in his torments to be buried like other people. If my father's conduct and behavior were pleasing to God, why was he tested by so many disasters? And what was my mother's life like? Did she not live a healthy life, even though she was plunged into a life of pleasures and desires? I will also, therefore, live the life that my mother did, for I prefer to believe in what I can see than in promises about what is to come.'

"By the time that I had decided to follow in the steps of my mother, night had fallen. And when I went to sleep, there appeared before me a man of enormous dimensions and with a savage face. Staring at me with

rage and a wild look, he asked me in a dreadful voice: 'Tell me what is in your heart.' I was so frightened that I dared not even look at his face.

"This fearful man, with the same sternness, asked me again:

"'Tell me, then. What have you decided?'

"When he saw that I was paralyzed by fear and was in danger of losing my senses, he himself reminded me in detail of all that I had just been thinking of myself.

"Recovering from my fear and astonishment and being unable to deny anything that the man had said, I began begging and imploring him to forgive me.

"Then, as though he had become calmer, he took me by the hand and said:

"'Come and see where your father and mother are. On the basis of this you can choose which way of life you want for yourself.'

"Taking me from where I was, he guided me to a vast garden, which was planted with various beautiful trees, beyond description in their charm and filled with different kinds of fruits. And there, as I was walking with this fearful man, my father came up to me, embracing me and covering me with tender kisses, saying, 'My beloved child.'

"I embraced my father with joy, asking if I might remain with him. My father sweetly replied:

"'Now, my child, this is not possible; if, however, you will follow my own way of life, not much time will pass and you will be here, too.'

"Just as I was about to continue in my requests to remain with my father, the Angel who was accompanying me pulled me by the hand and said:

"'Come, now, to see your mother, too, so that you can determine firsthand which way of life you want to lead.'

"Then, taking me to a place that was all dark, in which one could hear great disorder and groans, he showed me a furnace, the fires of which would spill over every time it surged up. And outside the furnace, a number of ghastly and frightening individuals were gazing at the sight.

"As I was looking at this frightening and terrible place of torture, I saw my mother, submerged to her neck in the flaming furnace, numberless worms gnawing on her all over. From my pain and fear, I was trembling, while my teeth began to chatter and to gnash.

"When my mother raised her eyes to look at me, she began to cry harrowingly and said to me:

"'Alas, my child, my pains are unbearable. My torments are un-

ceasing. For a few years of delight and sinful pleasure, I brought all of this terrible punishment on myself. Woe to me, such an unfortunate one! Woe to me, wretch that I am! Because of the ephemeral pleasures of temporary life, I am now tormented eternally. But, my child, take pity on your mother, who, as you see, is in flames and is being devoured by fire. Remember, my child, how I gave you suck and reared you, and take pity on me. Give me your hand and pull me out of here.'

"I, however, did nothing, and could not even approach my mother, who, with shame before those who were around her, cried out even more strongly and with tears:

"'My child, help me and do not scorn your mother and her lamentations. Do not close your eyes to this unfortunate mother, who is tortured in the Gehenna of fire and continually consumed by unsleeping worms.'

"Moved by sympathy for my mother, I stretched out my hand, so that I could pull her out of that frightful Hell. No sooner had the flames of the fire only slightly touched my hand, however, than I felt great pain and began to cry in moans. From my lamentations and moans, I awoke everyone in the house. They got up, turned up the lamps, and ran to my bed, asking with incessant questions to learn why I was crying in my sleep and groaning.

"So, having come to a bit, I began to relate to them everything that I saw in my vision.

"From that day on, I most decisively resolved to live as did my father, whose way of life I longed for. I pray that God will deem me worthy to succeed therein and to see my father again and live with him; for by the Grace of God, with my own eyes I saw the glory and honor which awaits those who ready themselves by living reverently and virtuously and, on the other hand, again, what fearful punishment and Hell awaits those who squander their lives on pleasures and passions."

D. St. Gregory the Dialogist

One day St. Benedict the man of God, while he was sitting in his cell, lifted his eyes up toward the Heavens and saw the soul of his saintly ascetic sister rising up to Heaven like a brilliantly white dove. His soul was thus filled with spiritual joy and happiness, and he thanked God. Afterwards, he announced his sister's death to his disciples and sent them immediately to the place where she had lived her ascetic life, in order to get her honorable and pure body and bring it to

the monastery; for the area in which this virgin dwelled was not far from St. Benedict's monastery.

Indeed, thus, the Brothers set out, found the dead nun, and brought her holy body back. Thereupon, St. Benedict buried her in the grave which he had prepared for himself. In this way, the sacred bodies of these two, whose minds were joined by the bond of the Holy Spirit, were not separated even in burial.

2. And yet another time this man of God was standing at the window of his cell, beseeching our All-Good God. Suddenly, he lifted his eyes toward Heaven and saw something strange. Wholly unexpectedly, there appeared from Heaven such a bright light that it lighted up the darkness of the night, so illuminating the air that it seemed to make the whole area brighter than the light of day. Now, along with this miraculous flood of light, as the Saint himself subsequently related, another miracle ensued (at the same time as the vision): a miracle filled with mystery.

"It looked," he relates, "as though the whole world were gathered at the end of a beam of sunlight; and though my attention was turned toward this heavenly light, I saw the holy soul of Germanus, the Bishop of Capua,* being taken up into Heaven, like a fiery sphere, by the Angels." Right away the next day, this righteous man sent one of his disciples to Capua, and he was informed that, at exactly the same moment that St. Benedict had seen this vision, St. Germanus, whose soul he had seen rising up to Heaven, had come to his end.

Peter

Tell me, Father, how is it possible for the whole world to be gathered under a single beam of sunlight, prior to the resurrection of all the dead? And how is it possible for the whole world to be visible to a single man?

Gregory

Pay attention, Peter, to what I am going to tell you. To that soul which has been made worthy to see the Creator, the whole world is circumscribed and limited. For the vision of Divine light grows so much within the mind, and the mind is so stretched and extended beyond the limitations of its being by this mystical vision, that it becomes higher

than all creation. When the mind reaches this state and sees how much it has broadened itself, then it understands how small what it could not even conceive of or see, when it was in the humble body, actually is.

Where, then, do you see anything unusual if this holy man, finding himself enlightened by the light of God and lifted up and broadened so greatly by this Divine enlightenment, should see all mankind as though it were gathered before him? This occurred, to be sure, not because the heavens and the earth were gathered together in one place, but because the Saint's mind had been taken away by that spiritual light and lifted up to God, where it was so broadened that what he saw can be considered an easy thing, since every single thing that is exists within the scope of God. By this miraculous light, then, which dazzled his external eyes, his spiritual eyes were enlightened with inner light, so that it could be revealed to him that the soul of St. Germanus of Capua was being taken into the heights by Angels, but also so that he might come to know how small and limited all of the things of the lower world are.

Peter

I agree with all that you have said.

Gregory

When the time had come for this holy man, that is, St. Benedict, to depart from this ephemeral life and to dwell unto the ages with God, he foresaw the day of his death and announced it to his disciples, including those who were far distant from him. He revealed to all of them that on the day of his death there would be a sign by which all would know that his soul had departed from his body.

Now, six days before his holy repose, he instructed his disciples to prepare his grave; and immediately he was seized by a very strong fever from which, after six days, his body was literally burning. The sixth day he again told his disciples to lift him up and take him to the Church.

After they had carried him to the Church and he had communed of the Pure Mysteries, he stood in the midst of his disciples, who were holding him up and supporting him, so that he could remain upright, and, raising his eyes toward Heaven, began fervently to pray. And thus it was, in this contrite posture, with his eyes cast upwards and praying with fervor, that he surrendered his blessed soul to God.

At precisely that moment, two brothers, one of whom was in his cell

and the other of whom was situated far away, saw precisely the same vision. Both of them, although each separately, saw a magnificent road leading from the cell of the Saint toward the East and up into Heaven. This road was completely covered with radiant vestments and silk. A number of splendid-looking men were ascending on the road, all holding lanterns and walking in file. Suddenly, another man, clad in white, who also shined forth brilliantly, stood near these other men, who were walking along, and asked them:

"Do you, indeed, know for whom this road has been adorned, which you behold with such wonder?"

"No, we do not know," they answered.

"This road," the white-clad man said, "is the road which Benedict, the beloved of God, will walk as he ascends into Heaven."

As soon as the two brothers recovered from this amazing vision, they immediately understood that it was related to the repose of the holy man; indeed, they were so sure of this that it was as though they had been present to see the last moments of his life.

E. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Makarios the Egyptian related the following incident to his disciples.

Once, while I was walking in the desert, I found a lifeless skull on the ground. I pushed it lightly with my staff and, to my amazement, I heard a voice from this skull. So, bravely and without fear I asked the skull:

"You, who are you?"

The skull answered me, as though it were a living person:

"I was a high priest of the pagan gods and Greeks who once lived near this place. And you are Makarios, a man of the spirit. Take note, then, that any time that you take pity on those in Hell and pray for them, they receive some comfort."

Abba Makarios once more questioned the skull:

"What is the nature of this comfort? And what is Hell like?"

"As far as Heaven is from the earth, such is the depth of the fire below us. In that fire we stand upright, entirely buried in it. We are so situated that one of the damned cannot see the other, but only his back. But when you pray for us, we are able to see one another's face for a moment. This, then, is the comfort which we experience."

Abba Makarios, on hearing this, sighed deeply and said: "Alas, such

misfortune does the day of his birth bring upon a sinner that it is better, as the Lord said of Judas His betrayer, had he not been born." After speaking to himself in this way, the Elder once again posed a question to the skull:

"Are there in Hell other torments that are worse than those which you have described?"

"Below us there are even more frightfully hellish things," the skull replied.

"And who is punished there?" the Elder asked.

"We, in the end," the skull said, "enjoy to some extent the mercy of God, since we did not know Him; those, however, who knew God and, despite this, denied Him are below us and suffer far more hellish torments."

This exchange having come to an end, the Elder took the skull, buried it beneath the soil, and went on his way.

Let us heed and fear all that this story tells us. For, if those who deny God suffer more greatly in Hell than unbelievers, we must take care not to deny God by works of darkness, that we might flee this fearful punishment. A denier of God is not just one who rejects Him in word and deed, but anyone who commits sinful acts, even if, with his words, he seems to confess faith in God. And a witness to the fact that what I say is true is the Apostle [Paul], when he proclaims: "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him" (St. Titus 1:16).

2. Likewise, the brother of the Lord, St. James, says: "If any man should think himself religious, that is, devout, and does not bridle his tongue, but misleads his heart into placing confidence in such faith, he is not thinking correctly and thereby fails to be benefited by religion; for 'faith, if it hath not works, is dead' (St. James 2:17)."

These words contain an obvious truth. For God, through the mouth of the Prophet, said: "Woe to those who blaspheme My name among the Gentiles." If we the people of God, the holy clergy, we who are called by yet other such honored names, insult God by our sins and therefore become the reason for unbelievers to blaspheme the good name of Christ, by Whose name the world knows us, how is it not just that we should be relegated to a deeper part of Hell than the unbelievers, we who are the reason for their blasphemy and insults before God? Furthermore, as the Savior, the Just Judge, Who is not a respecter of persons, says: "He who knows his Lord's will, and does not prepare himself, shall be beaten with many stripes" (that is, shall be more greatly

punished); "but he that knows not the Lord's will shall be beaten with few stripes" (that is, shall receive the least punishment) (St. Luke 12:47-48).

For this reason, my brethren, taking into account the fearful punishments of Hell, let us tremble and struggle, within the measure given to us by Divine strength, to appear faithful in every way by virtue of our good and virtuous works, and to work in all things for the glory of God, that the name of God might be glorified by all who see our good deeds.

3. Abba Silouan was once sitting among a number of brothers when, suddenly, he was taken by ecstasy and fell down with his head to the ground. After a short time, he rose up with tears. The brothers insistently pleaded with him and persuaded him to speak with them:

"Tell us, Father, what it is."

So, Abba Silouan, with emotion, told them:

"I was taken to the fearful Judgment of God and saw monks being led to Hell, as many lay people were being escorted into Paradise."

For this reason Abba Silouan always mourned and never desired to leave his cell. If he was obliged to leave his cell, being forced by some matter of necessity, he would cover his face with his *koukoulion* [this is the Greek word for a monastic hat, usually cylindrical in shape, over which is placed a veil that covers the head and falls over the shoulders; the term is also used, at times, in reference to just the hat or the veil, which can be worn separately (in fact, in the Greek monastic tradition, female monastics wear *only* the veil, and not the hat—*Trans.*].

* Capua is an ancient city in Italy, the capital of the province of Campania. It is well known in history from the victory of Hannibal over the Romans in 216 B.C. Christianity was introduced into Capua at an early stage, and it is related that a Basilica dedicated to the Holy Apostles existed there during the reign of St. Constantine the Great. The city was destroyed in 840 A.D. by the Saracens; the modern Italian city of Capua was built on its remains, about four kilometers to the northwest.

Hypothesis X

The soul, after its departure from the body, undergoes testing in the air by evil spirits which encounter it and attempt to impede its ascent.

A. From the Life of St. Anthony the Great

1. St. Anthony the Great was once preparing to eat at his normal time; according to custom, he stood to pray. It was then the ninth hour. But at that very moment he felt himself somehow carried off spiritually. And this unusual thing took place: While he was standing there, he looked on himself, as though he had left his body, and his soul was taken into the air by several beings. After this, he saw a number of fearful and ugly creatures standing in front of him in the air, trying to keep him from passing.

Those who were guiding his soul began to wrangle with these frightening creatures, who were asking for an account of the soul which they were accompanying and whether it was responsible to them for some debt. While the latter wanted to begin their assessment from St. Anthony's birth, those who were accompanying him stopped them, saying: "Whatever errors Anthony committed from his birth have been erased away by the Lord; however, all of his deeds from the time that he became a monk and dedicated himself to God you may examine."

Though the demons accused Anthony, they could not prove their accusations; so his path remained free of impediments. Immediately, he saw himself return to his body, and he revived. And St. Anthony became as he had earlier been.

However, such was his agitation that he forgot to eat, and he passed the rest of the day and the whole night groaning and praying.

He was stunned when he reflected on how many temptations we must combat and what trials one must endure to pass by the air-borne demons. And he thought that this must be the meaning of the words of the Apostle Paul: "According to the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2).

For this power alone belongs to the Enemy of our souls, that is, to war against us and try to impede those souls ascending into Heaven.

Thus St. Paul counsels us with even greater insistence, saying: "Take unto yourself the whole armor of God so that you can withstand the Devil on that wicked day, that the enemy might be brought to shame and thus have to say of you nothing dishonorable" (*cf.* Ephesians 6:13).

2. After this vision, several people went to visit St. Anthony and began to discuss with him the soul and where it goes after its departure from the body. The very next night, he heard a voice call to him saying:

"Anthony, arise. Come out from your cell and look."

Indeed, St. Anthony the Great went out (for he knew what voices he should heed) and, having lifted his gaze up to Heaven, saw the following vision.

A tall and fearful creature, horrible in form, was standing straight up. His height seemed to reach up to the clouds, while a multitude of creatures flew around him, as though they had wings. He would stretch out his hand and some of these he prevented from flying, while others succeeded in passing by and flying higher, continuing on their path without obstruction. This immensely tall demon would grit his teeth over those who escaped him; but, on the contrary, he would rejoice over those who drew near and were knocked down.

Forthwith St. Anthony heard a voice:

"Anthony, try to digest all that you have seen." And thereupon he cleared his mind and reflected on what he had seen. It was the passage of souls into Heaven, and the immensely tall and frightening wild man, who was standing erect, was the Devil, who despises the faithful. He takes hold of those who have been guilty of sins and tries to prevent them from passing. Those who did not in their lives heed his counsel, however, he cannot hold, and for this reason such persons succeed in soaring above him and making their way to Heaven. When St. Anthony the Great saw this vision, it reminded him of the earlier one that he had seen, and he struggled daily, thereafter, to excel in the virtuous life.

B. From the *Gerontikon*

Two brothers once agreed both to become monks. After their tonsures, they rightly decided to build two cells, one some distance from the other. They departed from one another, therefore, and each was, for the sake of silence, cloistered in his cell. A number of years passed without one seeing the other, since neither of the two went out of his cell.

It happened, however, that one of the brothers fell ill and the Fa-

thers went to visit him. They observed that the monk fell into ecstasy and, a bit later, came to. So, with some curiosity, they asked him: "What did you see, Father." "The Angels of God," the sick monk answered, "coming to fetch me and my brother and to lead us into Heaven. As we were going up, we were met by hostile powers, countless in number and of fearful form. Though they bothered us a great deal, they nonetheless had no success against us. Just as we were passing by these powers of Satan, they started saying: 'Purity gives great boldness to a soul.'"

No sooner had he spoken these words than the monk reposed. When the Fathers who were there determined that he was dead, they sent a monk to announce this to his brother. But the monk found the brother also dead. And so the Fathers glorified God in wonderment.

C. From St. Isaiah

Beloved Brother: Those who occupy themselves with the ephemeral and vain world, if they advance and make gains, do not count the trials which they have endured, but rejoice at the progress which they have made. Can you imagine, then, my brother, what joy the soul of a man who undertakes spiritual work for God, and finishes it successfully, experiences? It is natural for the soul to feel unfading joy, for at the moment of its departure, the good works which it has done will precede it when it ascends into Heaven. At that time the Angels of God will rejoice together with it, as they see it delivered from the powers of darkness.

This happens because, when the soul of man departs from the body, the Angels go along with it. However, all of the powers of darkness then hasten to meet it and seek to take hold of it, thereby to examine it carefully and learn whether or not it was engaged in any of their own works. It is not now the Angels who struggle with the demons to protect the soul; but the deeds of the soul surround and defend it, so that the demons cannot touch it. And if the good deeds of the soul defeat the demons, then the holy Angels sing on its behalf, until the soul, with joy and gladness, meets God. At that time, the soul completely forgets all of its good deeds in this vain world, as well as the labors it knew.

Blessed, indeed, is he against whom the leaders of darkness can find nothing. He will find joy, honor, and rest beyond all measure. Let us thus weep with the whole power of our soul before God, that in His goodness He will take pity on us and send aid from on high, by which we might do all to conquer the leaders of evil, who obstruct our path [to-

wards Paradise—*Trans.*]. Let us thus, disengaged from the many other pursuits of life, take care with resoluteness of heart to fulfill the Will of God, which will save us from the hands of the demons when they shall come to meet us there above.

Let us remember love for the poor, that this love might save us from greed, when the sin of greed shall come to meet us.

Let us acquire peace with all, the humble and the great, that this might guard us against hate, when it shall come to meet us.

Let us acquire patience before all and in all things, that this might guard us against carelessness, when it shall come to meet us.

Let us love all of our brothers and sisters, without hating anyone or repaying anyone any ill done against us; for this shall guard us against envy, when this demon too shall come to meet us.

Let us love the endurance in humility of our neighbor's word, even if this word should bring upon us hurt and derision; for humility will guard us against pride, when it too shall come to meet us.

Let us seek to honor our neighbor and not to condemn or hurt anyone; for this shall protect us from gossip, when it shall come to meet us.

Let us despise the cares of the world and its honors, that we might be saved from its bewitching evil, when it shall come to meet us.

Let us teach our tongues to be unceasingly occupied with the commandments of God, righteousness, and prayer, that we might be protected from falsehood, when it too shall come to meet us.

All of these foregoing evils impede the soul, while the virtues to which we have attained help it to confront these evils successfully. Now, what prudent man would commit his soul to eternal death, just to be relieved from the labors required to gain these virtues?

Let us do all that is within our power and the power of our Lord Christ, which is great, to help humble ourselves; for our Lord Jesus Christ knows that man is hapless, and thus He has granted him repentance, as long as the soul is in this corruptible body, that he might, until his very last breath, correct himself and flee from sin.

D. From the *Gerontikon*

The esteemed Archbishop Theophilos said: Indeed what fear and terror and what need the soul experiences when it departs from the body or, afterwards, when it has been completely separated from it. For then all of the principalities and powers of darkness come upon it and make manifest all of the sins which it has committed, whether in knowl-

edge or ignorance, from the time of a man's birth until his last hours, when the soul is separated from the body. These powers brazenly draw near it and furiously accuse it.

Confronting these hostile powers of darkness are the holy powers—Angels—putting forth and calling attention to the good deeds that soul occasioned to perform.

Think what agony and terror the soul will experience when it stands before such a tribunal and faces such a fearful and impartial judgment.

It is impossible for anyone to express in words or to conceive in his mind the fear that overtakes the soul up to the moment that the decision of the Judge is given, and it is released from those who hold it. That moment precisely is the moment of the soul's greatest torment, until it hears the verdict of the Righteous Judge.

If, then, by the verdict of the Righteous Judge, the soul is given its freedom, immediately the enemies scatter and the bright Angels seize the soul from them and, with no more obstructions, it is led by the Angels to that inexpressible joy and glory to which it will finally be restored.

If, however, the soul lived in carelessness, and is thus found unworthy of being freed, then it shall hear that most dreadful voice: "Let the ungodly be taken away, that he see not the glory of the Lord" (Isaiah 26:10).

Henceforth begins for that soul the day of wrath, sorrow, and unceasing grief; it is given over to the outer darkness, hurled into Hell, and condemned to the eternal fire, in which it will remain damned unto the unfading ages.

What, then, do the luxuries and fanfare of this world benefit the soul? Where are the vainglory and the delights and the enjoyments of this vain and fleeting world? Where is the money? Of what benefit a high birth? Where are your father, mother, brothers and sisters, and friends?

What from all of this can free your wretched soul, as it is burned by the fire of Hell and tormented by indescribable punishment?

Hypothesis XI

How, after death, souls are assigned to the same place as those souls which lived in a similar way on earth.

A. St. Gregory the Dialogist

The Holy Gospel says of the elect: "In my Father's house there are many mansions." Now, if the righteous in that eternal blessedness enjoyed its good things in the same way, then there would be reason to believe that there is but one mansion, not many. However, there are many mansions in which the elect will be distributed, according to their worthiness, that they might together rejoice and be glad.

The fact that all of the chosen who are distributed among the different mansions receive only one coin shows that there is but one blessedness, enjoyed by all of those who are saved; the amount returned to each of the elect, however, differs according to the various works of virtue that they performed.

As for sinners, the Lord, referring to the Day of Judgment, says: "I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them." The reapers, that is, the Angels, bind up those sinners who have committed the same sins, so that they can be sent to Hell together; and thus the proud are tortured together with the proud, the immoral with the immoral, the greedy with the greedy, liars with those who lie, murderers together with murderers, and unbelievers together with unbelievers. All of these, joined together according to their types of sins, will burn in the various places of torture into which the Angels throw them.

Peter

I would like to ask this, in order to learn from you: How is it that in these recent years so much has been revealed about the soul which earlier escaped our attention? Perhaps this has come about so that we might see the future world presented to us in observable revelations?

Gregory

It is exactly as you have said; for, as the end of this world approaches, so the presence of the future world is bit by bit revealed by clear signs. In this world we are unable even to discern one another's thoughts, whereas in the future life we will be able to see that all that we have in our hearts is also in the hearts of others. Thus, this limited world resembles the night, while the future life is like the day.

Now, just as when the night is ending the day begins to shine with light before the sun fully rises, the darkness somehow mingling with the light, before the darkness of night completely fades and is overcome by the light of the coming day, so exactly are things in this world. The end of this world is being mingled with the dawn of the future life, so that certain obscure things of this world are made known by reason of their intermingling with spiritual things. For this reason precisely, we are learning about things of that other world.

Certainly, however, we do not know all of those things of the other world, or know them clearly, but see them only dimly, as though our minds were illuminated in some way—in the same way that we perceive objects of the material world just prior to the rise of the sun.

B. From the Life of St. Evthymios

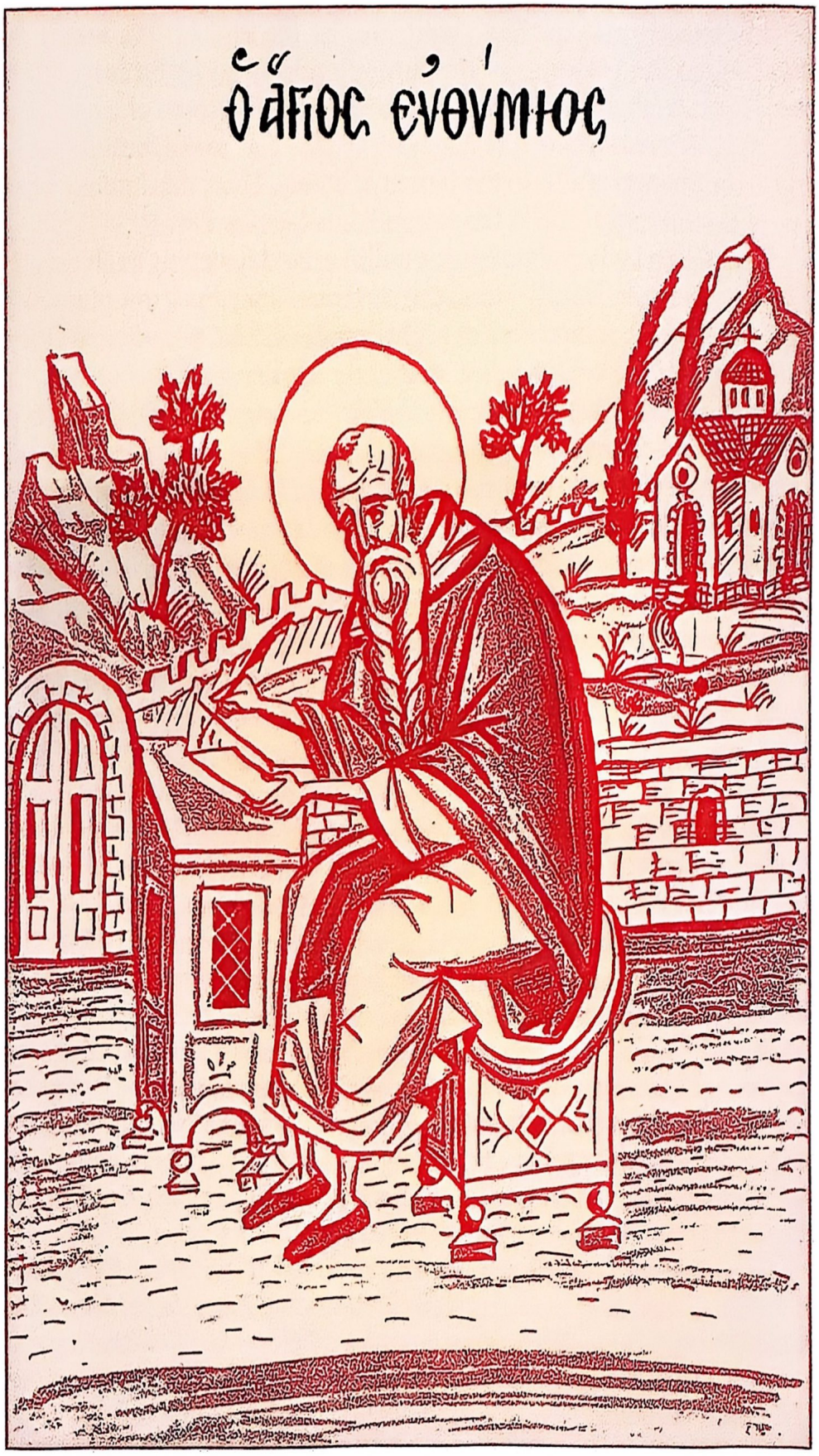
When our holy Father Evthymios reposed and his body, much tormented by ascetic exercises, was, with the chanting of the appointed hymns, placed in his richly decorated tomb, Dometianos, the disciple of this Father, a true disciple indeed, who had imitated the life of St. Evthymios with great exactitude, serving the Saint more than fifty years, would not leave the tomb, but remained at the grave for six days, believing that, after St. Evthymios' death, he could no longer live or even see the light of day without him. However, when the seventh day had passed, that night St. Evthymios, with a joyful countenance, appeared to Dometianos and said to him:

"Come, enjoy the glory that has been prepared for you. For God has granted us the privilege to live together here in this place."

Immediately, Dometianos ran and revealed all of this to the council of the Brothers. And then he, too, joyful in the hope for future good things, departed this life.

C. From Abba Isaac

Our Savior calls the mental levels of those who dwell in that other



St. Evthymios

realm the "mansions" of His Father. I mean by mental levels the diverse ways in which the mind of each of the saved takes pleasure in, and enjoys, the blessedness of Paradise. For the Lord did not characterize the mansions of Paradise as various places, but called the various ranks of the gifts of Grace "many mansions."

That is, just as each of us enjoys the sensible sun according to the acuity of his vision, without this single sun being divided into many different beams of light, but remaining a single light for all men, so it is exactly with the righteous in the next life. All of the righteous dwell in one place; each of them, however, will separately draw to himself the light and joy of the spiritual Sun according to the level of his own purity. Each of the righteous, that is, will enjoy as much light and joy as he is able to receive and to assimilate.

D. St. Gregory the Dialogist

Peter

I am of the opinion, honored Master, that since the human race is subject to many and incalculable passions, the greatest part of the heavenly Jerusalem must be filled with babies.

Gregory

Let us not doubt that baptized babies who die in their infant years will enter into the Heavenly Kingdom. We should not, however, believe that all those infants who have begun to speak will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. For the entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven will be closed to many babies because of their parents' bad rearing. In this city, there lives a certain man who is known to all. Three years ago, this man had a son who, if I recall, would then have been about five years old, for whom he had such human love that he did not even *try* to discipline him.

For this reason, the boy, when someone prevented him from getting his way, used to blaspheme the magnificence of God—and let me emphasize that this is something dangerous.

When, three years ago, a deadly plague fell upon the region where he lived, this young boy succumbed to it and was near death. As eyewitnesses recounted, while the father took the child into his arms, the boy himself saw evil spirits coming for him. The boy began to tremble, to blink his eyes in fear, and to cry out in despair to his father: "Father,

save me, protect me." Simultaneously, as he cried, he turned his face towards his father's chest, as though wanting to be hidden.

When the father saw his son trembling, in agony he asked him what he had seen. The son answered: "Black creatures came for me and wanted to take me away with them." No sooner had he finished this phrase, than he immediately blasphemed the name of the Divine Magnificence and, with this blasphemy, expired.

Thus, God, the All-Powerful One, in order to show by what sin the boy was given over to these evil servants, allowed him to die with this sin, which his father, while the boy was alive, did nothing to prevent. And this boy whom God allowed, by His mercy, to live as a blasphemer, by His righteous judgment was also permitted to blaspheme at his death, so that his careless father might know well his sin. For this father, being indifferent to the soul of his young son, reared for the Gehenna of fire not an insignificant sinner, but a great sinner.

E. From the *Gerontikon*

The Elders say: "Brethren, chastise children, that they be not a chastisement for you."

Hypothesis XII

God-loving parents should rejoice and be thankful for the trials and temptations that their children endure for the sake of the Lord. As well, parents who love God should exhort their children to struggle and to risk all for the sake of virtue.

A. From the Account of the Murder of the Holy Fathers of Sinai and Rhaïthou [Tor]

When the mother of this young man, who was known to everyone for his nobility, learned that her son had so bravely struggled with the barbarians who killed him in the cell in which he had lived as an ascetic, where he suffered countless wounds to his body, and that he did not let anything at all be taken from his cell, or let the barbarians remove his monastic habit, or submit to them when they promised not to kill him if he would agree to do any of those things which they asked of him, and that he had not only struggled with valor, but had died bravely—when, as I say, she learned all of this, then it was that she truly showed her kinship with him: She showed herself to be a true mother of this courageous young man.

When she was informed of his death, she dressed in bright clothes and put on a joyful face, and, having lifted up her hands to the heavens, said roughly the following to the Savior Christ:

"To Thee, Master, I entrusted my son, and I rejoice that now and in the future age he has been saved. To Thee I surrendered my son, and Thou art He Whom I considered his protector; I thus rejoice, indeed, that he has been preserved safe and unharmed from the Devil. For I do not think about his death or what his end was, but I look on the fact that he escaped the danger of every sin. I do not think about the fact that his body was so wounded or that he suffered a bitter death, but that he sustained his soul clean and immaculate to the end, and surrendered his spirit into Thy spotless hands.

"I reckon the death blows awards, and count the wounds as crowns. I would, my child, that your body had taken even more blows, that your rewards might have been greater. Thus, my son, you have paid me my

wages, for I held you in my womb; you have given me my reward for the pains of childbearing; you have honored me by the upbringing which I gave you. What then? Will you not count me as a partner in your achievements? I am a partaker of your struggle. Did you not perform like an athlete? But I rejoice in those same athletic feats. Did you not bravely stand up to the fury of the barbarians? But I also stood up to the natural pain of a mother. Did you not, to be sure, scorn death? But I ignored my maternal instincts. Did you endure the pain of butchery without complaint? But I stood up to the anguish of my very innards at your loss. My torments are equal and not less than your torments. Did you conquer the bitterness of pain? But I bear the pain of your loss throughout the year. For however fearful your death might have been, it happened once and was over; but the pain of your death will accompany me the whole of my life, and only because I can philosophize about it can I withstand it. I will endure this pain because I believe that you live with God, and that in a short time I will have that which will bring me nurture, when, in whatever manner, this shell-like structure, my body, is broken asunder and, as a free soul no longer hindered, I will pass on to eternal life.

"I am the happiest of all mothers, since I have presented to God such a combatant; blessed, again, and happy I must consider myself, since I have strengthened my courage with faith and can boast that you, my son, have sacrificed your body for Christ, with Whom your soul shall live throughout the ages, enjoying unending delight."

B. From the Life of St. Clement the Martyr, Bishop of Ancyra

When St. Clement was yet a baby, his father died. His mother, then, left alone without a husband, put her hopes, after God, solely in her cherished child. She was so dedicated to him that she became everything to the child: father, teacher, and mother.

While Clement grew and was excellently nourished and instructed by his tender mother, she sensed that her death was approaching. Thus, with affection and maternal fondness she embraced her child, who had not yet reached his tenth year of age and whom she had sought to make not an inheritor or recipient of her own riches, but of the heavenly treasures. She began, while kissing him with great love, to advise him:

"My child, my beloved child, my child, who became an orphan before you even knew your father, but who was enriched, since you gained as your father God, Who made of your orphanhood good for-

tune—indeed, I gave birth to you in the body, but Christ reared you in the strength of the spirit. You have known your Father. Do not betray the qualities of a son of the Savior. Worship only Christ. Have trust only in Christ. He is true immortality. He is our salvation. He is the One Who came down from Heaven for us and, by His Resurrection, raised us up with Him to Heaven, making us once again the children of God.

"He who submits to Him, the Master, will avoid all difficulties; he shall conquer not only such kings and tyrants as honor idols, but shall shame even the demons, whom the idolaters honor, and their very leader and protector, the Devil."

Afterwards, having said this, her eyes filled with tears, and, her soul overcome by Divine Grace, she saw, with the eyes of spiritual vision, all that would befall her son, which things she related to him in a prophetic way. She said: "I beseech you, my most beloved son, above all to do me one favor. Since we have come upon difficult times, and the winds of ungodly persecution blow, I know that you, too, will be led against princes and powers for His sake, as the Lord has foretold. It is this honor, then, my child, that I wish you to do me: for the sake of the Savior, stand up against the tyrants with courage and remain firm in your faith, for my sake, until the end of your life. And I have faith in Christ that the crown of martyrdom will soon blossom on your head.

"Ready yourself, then, and incite your soul to courage, so as not to be found unprepared at the hour of your trials. For the fight to which you are called is not one waged against the usual enemies, nor on behalf of everyday good things; rather, with regard to the antagonists in this match, they are Evil himself and his followers and servants. And with regard to the aims of this match, the combat is being waged for eternal life and honor; or, in case the combatant fails, the loss will entail unending shame and eternal damnation. So in this match, let the good and beneficial things inspire you, rather than being frightened by the hardships which you will experience.

"It is a contemptible thing, my son, if soldiers will die willingly for their earthly king, who, like them, is a mortal and a servant, yet we will not, in the same manner, endure death for our immortal King. Keep in mind that the soldiers of an earthly king gain nothing of worth from him when they die; for what gifts are a worthy exchange for a life? And how can a person who is killed take joy, after death, in all the honor given him?

"If, however, you die for the common Master of all, our Savior Christ, you will then have gained, instead of what is fleeting, eternal

life. Instead of fading joy, glory, and riches which pass from the hands of those who possess them, you will enjoy the gladness of eternal blessedness.

"Though we may not be dying now, will we not in too short a time expire, so as to pay that debt of ruination common to all men? Yet, death in Christ we cannot rightly and justly consider death; for with the power of our good hope for future good things, even this feeling about death disappears.

"Above all, my son, you must think about these things: that is, that the Maker of all creation and the Creator of our race became man for us, and coming down to earth dwelled among men. But should I not say the most important thing? That our Master was condemned to death by His worthless servants; and was then scourged; and came to His end on the Cross.

"And all of this He suffered for us and our salvation, that He might abolish the tyranny of death and that the curse of old might come to an end, so that the gates of Heaven might be once again opened to us.

"How, then, is it not unpardonable, my child, when He, though the Master of all of us, endured such a fearful passion on our behalf, who have dared to wreak havoc, for us not to wish to suffer for His sake even the slightest of things?

"Reflect on these things, my child, and let nothing separate you from the love of Christ; neither the threats of princes, nor bodily torments, nor the fear of earthly kings, whose anger and pride quickly pass, whose fire burns out, and whose swords rust. You must win for yourself above all the good things which have been prepared for the Martyrs; thus, even Heaven is a reward, should you be martyred."

These same things the mother told Clement every day, having truly within her the very spirit of wisdom, which spoke through her. And her son was indeed as wise as a white-haired old man, and thus had need of these profound exhortations. Just before her end, his pious mother also added the following words: "My son, give to me, your mother, these kinds of payments—let these be my wages for the pain which I tasted when I bore you, that I might be saved by childbearing, as the Apostle Paul says, and be glorified through my child's members. I, my child, shall very soon leave this world for good (this she said because she fully foresaw her death), by the power of Grace, and this worldly light will not shine on me in the morning; and then, you shall be a light for me, and, by the power of Christ, my life. I thus ask you from the depths of my soul not to betray the hopes that I have placed in you.

" A Jewess once gave up her seven children to martyrdom for Christ, and she thus suffered martyrdom seven times;* you alone, however, are sufficient for my glory. I shall be thrice-blessed among mothers, as long as I am greatly glorified because of you. My child, behold that I am departing before you to Eternity. Today I will completely leave you in body and I will not respond to the desires of your eyes to behold me. But believe me, when I die, my soul will be bound to yours, and with it I will boldly worship at the throne of Christ, taking pride in the wounds of your martyrdom—splendidly established in the wounds of your martyrdom—and therefore becoming myself a partaker of your rare and magnificent awards and joy."

These things the mother said to her son, while she at the same time kissed him insatiably all over his body. The blessed woman then resumed: "I kiss the body of a Martyr; a body which will shortly be offered as a sacrifice to Christ."

Her son then fulfilled all of those things which are appropriate to a son who loved his tender mother: He immediately gave his mother's body to be buried in the ground; but he also, without delay, embraced the monastic life and dedicated himself, in keeping with his mother's command, to detachment from the world for the love of Christ, for Whose sake he was later to sacrifice his own life. So, from that time on, throughout his monastic life, he ate only legumes, always remembering the three youths, whose bodies were made invincible by fasting, so as not to be burned by the fire of passions or by the flame of the furnace of the senses.

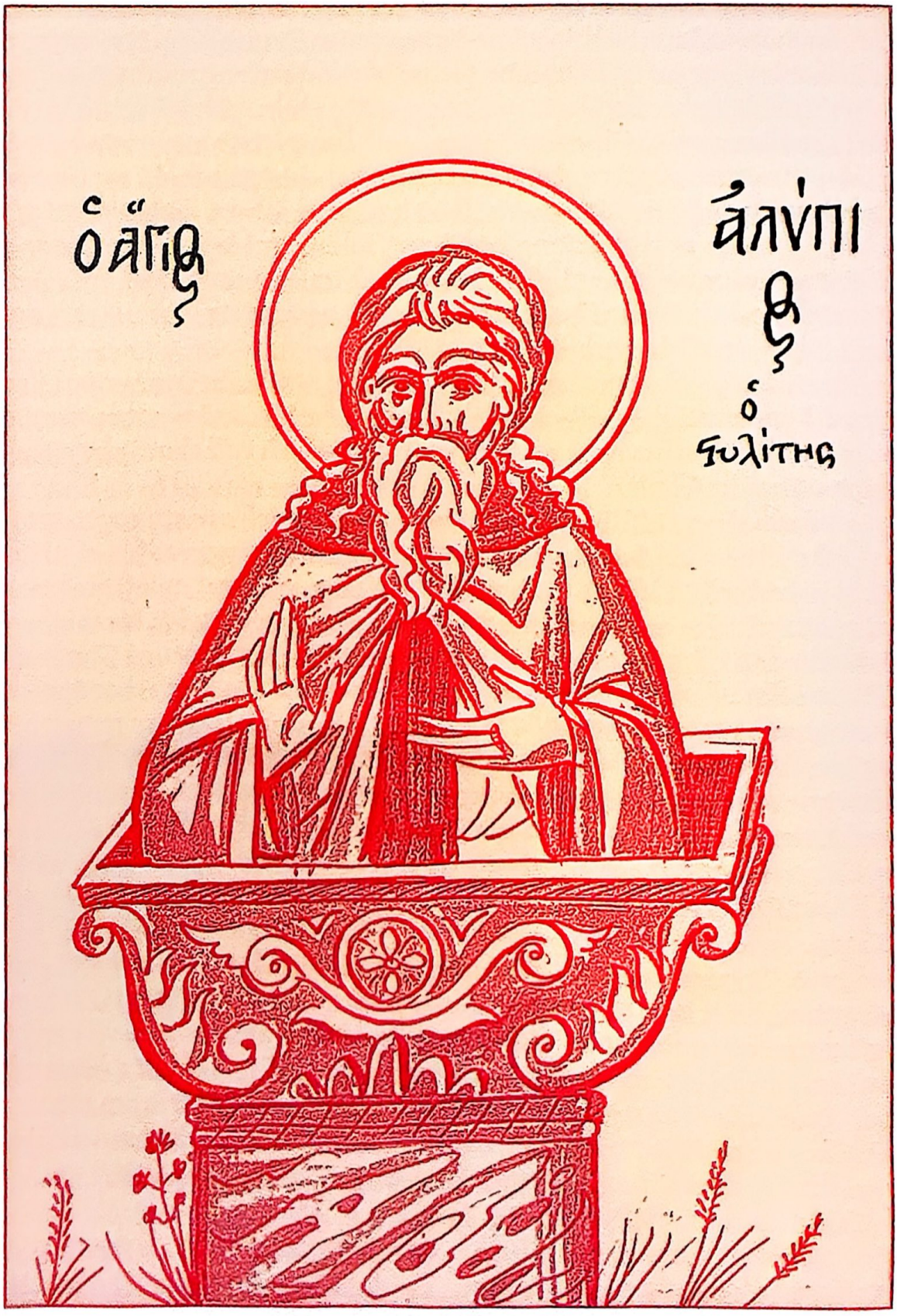
C. From the Life of St. Alypios

1. St. Alypios, burning with the indomitable love of God and carefully weighing what he might do in the present life to stand firm and persevere, continually united to the object of his desires, and wishing to see God clearly with his whole mind and be truly united to Him, ultimately decided to reject everything worldly and to separate from his relatives, friends, acquaintances, and, indeed, from the mother who bore him, and to choose, as his way of life, the good life of silence.

This decision he confided only to his mother.

"Mother," he told her, "I am occupied by a burning desire to go to the East, where many, having chosen the Hesychastic life, have lived the happy life with spiritual blessedness and with fervent love of God."

When the mother heard her son's decision, she experienced noth-



St. Alypios the Stylite

ing of that which women normally suffer on hearing of such a decision by their sons. Nor did she try to argue with him by reason of being a widow, or because she would be alone, or because she would lose a good son, which is so unbearable for mothers. She said nothing about these things; nor, indeed, did she do anything to dampen her son's holy desire (for this blessed woman cared more for her son's interests than for her own). Thus, she lifted up her gaze to God, extended her hands, and gave herself over, with all of her mind, to fervent prayer. Having finished, she movingly said to St. Alypios the Great:

"Go, my child. Go where the spirit leads you. Behold God, by Whose power we live. I surrender you to Him, and to Him I entrust you. He shall send His Angel before you, to show you where His Will is to be found. He shall send you help from His holy abode and assist you from the heavenly Jerusalem. He shall dress you with the breastplate of righteousness and encircle you with the helmet of salvation. May the righteousness of your deeds, my son, on behalf of which you have loved our Master more than your homeland and your parents, shine like the midday sun." A true mother, worthy of such a son! And for this reason precisely, she established within herself virtue as a foundation firmer than her womanly nature, such that she aspired never to do or say anything unworthy.

After she had said all of this and blessed him, the son put his hands around his mother's neck, and the mother embraced her son with affection, while the eyes of both filled with warm tears and they kissed one another tenderly. After breaking away from this mutual embrace, each took to his road; the mother returned to her home, while the son set off on his desired path.

When, after a few days, Alypios' departure became known to all, as it subsequently was, they were sad. As soon as the Bishop heard the news, he began without delay to pursue him, so that he caught up with him in Evchaïta,** where the Feast of St. Theodore was being celebrated. The Bishop began to beg him to turn back. He mixed his words with tears, to the point of pressing him to return to his mother. Moreover, he added that in a dream he had heard a Divine voice which advised Alypios not to be sad, if he did not succeed in reaching his destination, for holy places—the one who appeared in the vision went on to say—are found wherever one can succeed in living a blessed life.

Therefore, by the Will of Christ, Alypios returned to his homeland and to its soil and its sweet fruit. Having arrived back, he went up into one of the mountains that was located at the south of the city and there,

enclosed in a little hut, gave himself over to ascetic labors and struggles. When some time had passed, during which he trained himself with perseverance and determination in the works of virtue, the desire grew in him to live at a higher elevation, since he otherwise always aspired in all things to what was sacred and lofty.

Seeing a column on top of a tomb which was near him, he immediately gathered some planks and arranged them on the top of the column. In this makeshift covering that he had constructed, he confined his body, and remained there struggling against the changes in weather. In this difficult and hard effort, he had as his helper his mother, who did not leave him at all and who helped him with equal zeal.

It so happened that the evil spirits, angered by the angelic life of St. Alypios, once gathered in numberless columns and threw so many rocks at him that, from all of the blows of the rocks, most of the planks on top of the column, with which he had closed himself in, began to collapse and to come totally apart. One of the rocks, indeed, and a fairly large one, wounded the Saint's shoulder. The Saint, however, without being at all intimidated and wanting to show the demons that he considered his wounds to be but childish darts, said his morning prayers, and, taking an axe from his mother, broke up his whole dwelling and threw it down to the ground, so that it would not obstruct the demons' rock-throwing.

The mother of St. Alypios, hearing the sound of the planks falling and seeing them broken on the ground, hit her forehead with her right hand and, perplexed, said to the Saint:

"What is all of this, my son? Why did you destroy what little protection you had? How will you endure the cold of winter? How will you be protected from the fierce rain storms? How will you stand the fearful rays of the summer sun, that burn like fire?"

Hearing this, the Saint answered:

"What, then, mother? Shall we not endure cold here and thus be hot in that other place? Should we not endure the heat of the day here, in order to escape the punishment of the eternal and unquenchable fire? Without these hardships, how will we rightly receive any reward for our labor?"

With these and other similar words, he persuaded his mother not only to let him do away with the planks, but to take off his outer garment as well. This reverent and holy mother was not used to spoiling her son, even though within her there was strong affection for him, whom she saw suffering for Christ. She denied her motherly nature,

however, in order to be honored more by God through her offspring.

One could truly see, thus, a mother rejoicing for her beloved son and a son rejoicing for his God-loving mother, God being glorified by the work of both. For who does not bless the fruit of this pure mother? But who does not, once again, bless the roots of such a wondrous one? For this holy mother, among all of the other good traits that she had, had the following: She remained near her son, as we said before, in order to serve him. She pitched her tent near to his column and, rejecting every joy of life, felt such happiness that she thought herself in Paradise, enjoying its beauties. With the work of her hands, she furnished all that was needed for their sustenance and, at the same time, looked after charitable works and the poor.

Once the following characteristic incident took place. A man, in a discreet and devout way, once gave the Saint's mother a sum of money; she kept it until, one day, with her son's consent, she went down to the city to buy various things that they needed for their sustenance. But as she was returning to the hermitage with everything that she had bought, she was moved by the requests of some poor people, who asked for her charity, and distributed all that she had to them. When she reached the hermitage and her son saw her empty-handed, he said:

"Mother, where are the goods that you bought? We have need to use them immediately."

Then she, in a completely natural way, said:

"My son, I gave them to God and to the poor. However, I believe that we will get them back. I did not think it right to ignore the hungry supplications of the poor for a little morsel of our food and, thereby, for us to become hypocrites before the living God. I am sure that with the prayers of those poor and hungry people, we will also be shown God's mercy."

When the holy man heard this, as her true son, he blessed her and accepted all with thankfulness.

2. Also, the wondrous St. Sophia encouraged her daughters, Faith, Hope, and Love [*Agape—Trans.*], with truly God-loving words of exhortation prior to their martyrdom, rendering them courageous before their martyric struggles and deaths. But she was also present at the martyrdom of each one and, seeing their tortures, gave them boldness with her words of comfort. She remained at the place of their martyrdom until she had seen them all meet with a martyric end. And after the glorious deaths of her daughters, she was greatly joyous and thanked God

with fervor. After three days, she too, like her daughters, departed for Eternity, uniting her body with theirs and being shown forth herself as an inheritor, with them, of the glory of Heaven.

D. From the Martyrdom of the Holy Forty Martyrs

The holy Forty Martyrs [a group of Christian soldiers martyred under Licinius in the early fourth century near Sebaste, in Lower Armenia—*Trans.*], meeting their end in the arena of martyrdom, stood all night in the middle of a lake and withstood freezing cold with indomitable calm. Early in the morning, they were lined up on the beach, so that their limbs could be crushed with clubs. During this entire time, the mother of one of the Forty Martyrs remained next to them and watched after her tortured son. Her son was the youngest of the Forty Martyrs, and the mother feared that perhaps his young age and his love of life might incite cowardice in him, and he might, therefore, appear unworthy of his rank and the respect of the soldiers. She thus stood near and followed after her son with care, so that no such thing would happen.

She gave him courage, stretching out her hands and saying sweetly with faith:

"My sweetest son, now a child of the heavenly Father, endure for a while, so that you might be found perfect. Do not fear your tortures. Behold, Christ is invisibly with us and is helping you; you will thus feel nothing bitter or laborious. All of the fearful tortures have come to an end; you have conquered all of these with your courage. From here on there are but joy, pleasure, rest, happiness, and all that you will enjoy as you rule together with Christ and with Him act as a mediator for me, who gave you birth."

After the torturers had broken the limbs of the Saints, their souls departed to be with God. The [pagan—*Trans.*] soldiers, having brought carts, placed the bodies of the Saints atop them, so that they could take them and throw them on the bank of a nearby river. But when they saw that this youngest of the Saints, whose name was Meliton, was still breathing, they left him there at the place of his martyrdom, expecting that he might live. However, when his mother saw that only he had been left behind, she became upset and reckoned this both her son's death and her own. Overlooking her womanly weakness and forgetting her motherly instincts, she lifted her son on her shoulders and nobly followed the carts bearing the dead Martyrs, believing that only thus

would her son live, seeing him die as a Martyr together with the other Martyrs.

So, when her son breathed his last, just as she lifted him on her shoulders, she was set free from all of her motherly responsibilities. She considered the death of her son a great event of the sweetest kind, for which reason she was disposed to jump for joy. Thus, she ran quickly with her son's corpse to the place where the precious Relics of the other Martyrs were. She placed the corpse of her beloved son on top of them and made it one of them, so that his dead body might not be separated from the other bodies, just as his soul had already been numbered among the souls of the Martyrs.

After this, the instruments and servants of the Devil lighted a great fire and burned the bodies of the Martyrs. And out of hatred for the Christians, in order that they could not recover these precious Relics of the Martyrs, the evildoers threw them into the river. By Divine Providence, however, the precious Relics were caught together in a deep chasm, from which they were pulled out by Christian hands; thus was this treasure given to us intact.

* This is in reference to St. Solomone and her seven sons, who are honored by the Church on August 1.

** Evchaïta was a small city in Asia Minor, southwest of Amaseia (modern-day Amasya), and was a Metropolitan See in Byzantine times. It was also the home of the Holy Great Martyr Theodore Stratelates. Today this city is called "Avkat" in Turkish.

Hypothesis XIII

How one renouncing the world should go to a remote place; what constitutes a remote place and what benefit derives from it; and what places are most appropriate for living out the ascetic life.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Iakovos said that it is of even greater worth for one to become a stranger himself, for the sake of God, than to show hospitality to strangers.

2. Abba Longinos once asked Father Loukios:

"Abba, my soul yearns to dwell in a remote place."

"If you do not succeed in controlling your tongue," the Elder replied, "you are not in a remote place, no matter where you move. But if you control your tongue, then you will be far removed even here."

3. An ascetic Elder said: "If a monk knows that there is a place where he can thrive spiritually, but does not go there because he might thus be deprived of the necessities of life, then this monk does not believe that God exists."

4. A brother asked one of the Elders:

"Why, Father, is it not possible for those of our generation to maintain the ascetic life of the Fathers before us?"

"Because," the Elder answered, "it neither loves God, nor does it flee away from people, nor does it disdain the material goods of this world; for in the soul of a man who flees from other men and from materialism, there begins to be born a spontaneous contrition and desire for the ascetic life. Just as someone who wants to extinguish a fire in his field, but has no time to cut away those things which lie before the spreading fire, will thus be unable to put it out, so a man, if he does not flee to a place where he earns his bread only with great labor, cannot succeed in the ascetic life. For the soul does not quickly want that which it cannot see.

5. A brother asked Abba Sisoes:

"Father, what does it mean to remove oneself to a remote place?"

"To be silent," the Elder replied, "and to have nothing of your own, whether or not you seek a remote place—this is a true retreat to remoteness."

6. A brother asked an Elder:

"Father, what is the virtue of withdrawing to a remote place?"

The Elder, in response, related the following:

I know a brother who lives as a hermit. He was once in Church and, as is customary, afterwards got in line for dinner and thus sat down to eat with the brothers in the *trapeza* [refectory—*Trans.*]. When several of the brothers saw him, they said: "Who asked him to stay to eat?" And addressing him, they said: "Get up and leave here." Immediately the stranger got up from his place and went out of the refectory.

Several other brothers, however, were sorry for the rudeness toward the stranger and called him to the refectory again. When he sat down at the table, they asked him: "Tell us what feelings you had when you were so rudely thrown out of the refectory and then led back?" The stranger answered quietly: "At that moment I thought of myself as one of the dogs, who leave when they are thrown out and who come when they are called."

7. One of the Fathers relates the following: There were once two neighbors. One was a foreigner and the other a native to the place where they lived. The foreigner was a little lazy, while the native, on the other hand, was quite industrious. It happened, however, that the foreigner died first. Their Elder, since he had the gift of clairvoyance, saw a great group of Angels guiding his soul up to Heaven. But the moment it reached up to Heaven and was ready to enter, there took place an examination as to the worthiness of the soul to enter. Then a voice from on high was heard to say: "It is clear that he was, indeed, a bit lazy, but open up to him, since he removed himself from the world."

Shortly thereafter, the native reposed. And all of his relatives came for his funeral. The clairvoyant Elder noticed that there were no Angels anywhere, and he was amazed. So, he fell down before God with tears and said: "How is it that the foreigner, even though he was lazy, enjoyed such glory, while this monk, though industrious, experienced no such thing?" Immediately a voice from Heaven told him the following: "This industrious monk, here, when the moment of his death was approach-

ing, opened his eyes and saw his relatives crying. This comforted his soul. However, though he was lazy, the foreigner, nonetheless, saw none of his own at the time of his death. His loneliness caused him to cry and groan. Thus, God comforted him."

B. From Abba Isaiah

If you decide to live as a stranger for the sake of God, do not attempt to make acquaintances with the inhabitants of the place where you go, and do not have many relations with them; for in that case, it is better to stay with your blood relatives. If you take a cell in your native place, do not allow yourself to make too many friends; one person is enough, so that you will have a helper if you become ill. Take care not to lose the benefits that living in a remote place brings you. If you go to live in some place, do not wait until you know how people live there, in order to get a cell, but do so immediately, so that you avoid any reservations, whether about uneasiness, rest, or some obstacle placed before you by friends. For, if you are wise, you will consider all of these things to be but of a few days' duration, your death and your life as well.

Above all struggles and first in rank is removing oneself to a remote place, if one does so alone and as an unknown person, leaving everything behind and coming into a faraway place, taking with him as provisions his perfect faith in God, his hope, and a heart steadfast in its intentions. For surely, if you do this, the demons will encircle you in great numbers. They will intimidate you with thoughts about trials, severe poverty, and fearful illnesses. They will implant in your mind uneasy thoughts, so that you will fall into their hands: "What will you do?" "Is there anyone to care for you?" "Who will befriend you?" And God will test you, so that your zeal and love for Him might be made manifest.

Now, if you close yourself up alone in your cell, the demons will also sow in your mind other heavy thoughts of cowardice and will continuously whisper these to you: "Withdrawal to a remote place does not alone save a man, but also the maintenance of the commandments." They will bring to mind the memory of all whom you encountered in the world, together with your blood relatives, and will say to you: "Are not all of these servants of God?" After that, they will make you think about the anomalies of the seasons and the burden of the body, and implant in your heart other similar thoughts, so that it will be taken by inattention.

If, however, love and hope dwell in your heart, these ill whispers

will have no effect; for then the desire that you have for God will show forth, if you indeed love Him more than your physical comfort. You did not withdraw to a remote place without reason, but in order to prepare yourself for the fight against your enemies and to know how to crush each one of them in the appropriate circumstance, until you are made free and reach the rest of passionlessness.

Brother, if you turn away from the material world and its comfort, beware the demon of sadness, lest, on account of great poverty or grief, you fail to succeed in reaching the standard of the great virtues, which are: not to count yourself great; to withstand scoffing and insults; and to have your name mentioned nowhere in the world. Now, if you labor to acquire these virtues, they shall make ready the garlands of your soul. For do not imagine poor only those who reject the world and live in external poverty, but also those who have become impoverished in all evil and who unceasingly, as the hungry think on food, are mindful of God. Not only do those who have external woes attain to passionlessness, but those who care for the correction of the inner man and cut off their wills will also receive the crown of the virtues.

Also try to understand well on what pretext the thoughts which agitate you are provoked. For many times your thoughts cause you to be careless, occupying you with the notion that you should change location without reason; but repenting of this, you remain where you are. Now, they (the demons) do this so as to render your mind sluggish and wavering. Those who have reflected on the nefarious nature of these thoughts remain unagitated, thanking the Lord for the place which He has given them to stay. For patience, endurance, and love make a man able to be thankful for his labors and hardships. Contrarily, carelessness, inattention, and the love of comfort seek a place in which they might be extolled. And whenever the glory of the many enfeebles the senses, the passions inevitably overcome them and bring them to ruin, and by indulgence and satiety destroy any internal self-control.

C. From St. Diadochos

The soul is not eager to separate from the body, if it does not become wholly indifferent to this world. For all of the senses of the body fight against faith, since the senses bind man to the present world, while faith promises to man the supreme perfection of the future world. Thus, one who has withdrawn from the world to a remote place and who is struggling should not bring to mind the beautiful branches of shade trees, or

cool springs, or gardens with various flowers, or splendorous houses, or remember his relationships with family; nor should he think about—if he by chance had such—pompous honors, but use, with thankfulness, only those things which are necessary, reckoning this life a foreign road and removing himself from every fleshly desire. For only if we thus restrain our mind will we prove able to restore it wholly to the marks of eternal life. Moreover, vision and taste, like the other senses, disperse the concentration of the heart when we indulge them beyond good measure.

It was first Eve who proved this with her actions, because up to the time that she did not take care for the forbidden tree, she kept the Divine command; for this reason precisely, as though covered by the wings of Divine love, she was even impervious to her nakedness. However, when she found the tree appealing and was touched with a great desire for it, and subsequently tasted its fruits with such active delight, she immediately realized that she was naked, because of a fleshly disposition towards bodily intercourse. Her desire being wholly given over to passion, she surrendered herself to the enjoyment of the present world, entangling Adam in her fall to the appealing taste and look of the fruit. From that time on, then, the human mind remembers God and his commandments only with difficulty.

Let us, thus, continually turning to the depths of our hearts and remembering God unceasingly, pass like blind people through this present life, which can so easily deceive us; for a characteristic mark of true spiritual philosophy is always to keep one's eyes from the love of anything material. This truth is also taught to us by Job, a man much experienced: "...God knoweth that mine heart hath not followed mine eye..." [cf. Job 31:7]. This is a mark and state of the most perfect self-control.

D. From Abba Isaac

This world resembles a dissolute woman who, in her desire for beauty, draws those who see her into yearning for her; and he who is seized by a yearning for this world, even if only a little, and becomes involved in it, cannot free himself from its grasp until his life has come to an end. And then only, on the day of his death, when he is stripped of everything and is thrown from his home, does man come to understand that this world is a delusion and false. Thus, if one wants to escape this world and to see its traps, let him remain far from it; then he will comprehend its ugliness.

E. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Once, in the city of Scythopolis,* there was an aristocrat who had committed a great many sins and had in every way polluted his body. Feeling compunction for his sins, however, he abandoned the world; and having built a cell in a deserted place, he lived the ascetic life therein, caring after his soul.

When they heard about this, a few of his friends began to send him bread, dates, and various necessities on a regular basis. The anchorite, on seeing that he had found rest and that he lacked nothing, said to himself: "Indeed this rest will exclude me from that rest above." Immediately, therefore, he abandoned his cell, saying: "Onward, my soul, let us seek out hardship; for the bread which should be my food is that of the dumb beasts; that is, the grass, with which the dumb beasts are fed, since I have done those things which the dumb beasts do."

2. By what means does a man break his former habit and become accustomed to the life of privation and asceticism? For the body to live without satisfying its rudimentary needs is impossible. But just as it is possible for the mind to restrain itself from diversions and softness, so, to be sure, a man can remain removed from those circumstances which invite softness—for when he beholds the sources of pleasure and softness, there is awakened in him the flame of desire for these things. And then he either turns to these sources or undertakes a struggle in the strongest of warfare. For this reason, our Redeemer commanded any who wish to follow Him to be divested of, and to cast away from himself, the sources of softness, and then to follow Him. And so He Himself, when (as a man) He began to fight against the Devil, warred against him in a dry desert.

3. Also, the Apostle Paul tells us to leave the city, when we take on the Cross of Christ. Let us see exactly what he tells us: "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" [Hebrews 13:13], which humiliation He endured for us, for He suffered outside the city that we might be redeemed. So, when a man departs from the world and worldly things, he quickly forgets his former way of life and is not tortured for many years with the remembrance of the joys of the world. The monk is much aided in this struggle by living in his cell in poverty and privation and by keeping his cell empty and stripped of everything that might inwardly move him to the desire for pleasure.

When the sources of softness are far from a man, he is not in danger of falling to a twofold war, an external and internal one, that is, the twofold war of the senses and the thoughts. For this reason, a man who keeps away from himself all those things which invite enjoyment is victorious without labor, and with greater ease than one who has around him all of those things which incite his desire.

4. Abba Poimen said: We must flee from bodily things, that is, material things, which arouse the passions. For when a man finds himself near the warring flesh, he is like someone suspended over a deep pit; whenever he wishes to move from his position, the Enemy can easily drag him into the pit. If one is, however, far from things bodily, he is like a man standing at a distance from the pit. Even if he is influenced by the Enemy and is drawn to the hole, so as to be thrown into it, he can, at the same time that he is so drawn, resist this and ask help of God, Who will shortly come to his aid and snatch the man from the hands of the Enemy.

5. Someone related the following story. There were three industrious brothers who were close to one another. But they chose different ways in their spiritual lives. The one was given to reconciling those who were fighting and battling with one another, in keeping with what is said in the Gospel: "Blessed are the peacemakers." The second decided to visit and serve the sick, and the third brother departed for the desert to live in silence and asceticism among the Fathers. The first brother, now, after being greatly belabored by people's squabbles and quarrels, and being unable to appease them all, went in despair to the brother who was caring for the sick. He found, however, that he too was sad in not being able to achieve perfection in his commission. The two having thus agreed, they left to see the ascetic brother, wishing to learn what had happened to him in his ascetic life of silence. On seeing him, they related to him, first, all that had befallen them; that is, how each had encountered numberless trials and had been unable to succeed in the work which he had voluntarily embraced. They then asked the ascetic to tell them what he had gained from the life of silence.

The ascetic put some water in a container and said to them:

"Look into this water." The water in the container was still agitated.

After a few moments time, he said to them: "Now look into the water." By now the water had become completely calm.

As they were looking, they saw their faces in the water, as though

they were looking in a mirror. Then, pointedly, the ascetic told them:

"My brothers, such also is he who finds himself among men; from the agitation, he does not see his sins. However, when he removes himself far from the world and establishes himself in an isolated spot, and his senses are quieted, then he sees his shortcomings and corrects himself, if he so wishes, with the help of the Grace of God."

6. An Elder said: "Just as a public road which is paved and which is trodden upon continuously does not sprout green grass and will not sustain anything that is sown on it, but only on untrodden earth are plants easily grown, so it is with men. As long as it dwells amidst the material pleasures of the world, the mind is unceasingly disturbed by worldly cares and trodden upon, so that it cannot recognize the passions which are hidden in its soul. If, however, it is silent, moving far from every distraction and from cares, then it sees the passions which are growing within it, and they become wholly clear; whereas before they eluded his attention, even though they were continually within him, now he treats them and attends to them."

7. A brother asked an Elder:

"Is it a good thing for me if I go to live in the desert?"

"When the Israelites," the Elder answered, "were released from Egypt, as though from temptation, and were dwelling in tents, then it was revealed to them how they should reverence God. Likewise, ships, when they are in open seas and are in a tempest, can do nothing; when, however, they come into a harbor, then they are given over to business. This same thing happens to a man. If he does not flee from turmoil and remain enduringly in a place of silence, he can never come to a knowledge of the truth."

"And what should one do, my Father, to receive the gift of virtues?" the brother once again asked.

The Elder replied:

"If one wishes to learn a trade, he must set aside all other cares, dedicate himself to this alone, and humbly attach himself to a teacher, accepting every correction; thusly, he learns a trade. Exactly the same thing applies to the monk. Unless he puts an end to every worldly occupation and considers himself worse than any man, and unless he ultimately entrusts himself to a spiritual teacher, he will never achieve virtue."

8. An Elder related the following: "When I was younger, I had an Abbot who always liked to go to a faraway desert and to be silent there. So one day I said to him: 'Why, Abba, do you always go into the desert? I am of the opinion that he who lives near the world and sees it, but for the sake of God turns a blind eye, has a greater reward than he who sees nothing.' The Abbot answered me: 'Believe me, my child, until one reaches the stature of Moses and becomes almost a son of God, he is not benefited by the world. I am yet a son of Adam; like my forefather, the moment that I see the fruit of sin, immediately I desire to pick it. I eat it and I die. For this reason our Fathers fled to the deserts, in which they did not find those objects which draw a man to the passions, and thus they easily put the passions to rest.'"

9. Abba Tithoes said that to withdraw to a remote place is for a man to close his mouth, regardless of where he is.

F. From St. Ephraim

Any place where a man can set his life aright is a calm harbor; those, however, who do not govern their lives fall down like leaves from a tree.

* Scythopolis was a city in Palestine, called "Bet She'an" or "Beth-Shan" in Hebrew. The Greeks named it "Scythopolis" because it had, as they believed, been founded by Scythians. In the Christian era it was an episcopal See.

Hypothesis XIV

From whence the fear and love of God are first engendered in man and to what extent he is obliged to fear and love God.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother asked Abba Evprepios:
"How is it that the fear of God first comes to the soul?"
The Elder answered:
"If a man chooses humility and poverty, the fear of God will also come quickly to him."

2. Abba Iakovos said: "Just as a lamp lights up a dark place, in the same way precisely the fear of God, when it comes into the heart of man, illuminates him and teaches him all of the virtues and commandments of God."

3. A brother asked an Elder:
"How does the fear of God come to the soul?"
"If a man chooses humility and poverty," answered the Elder, "and if he condemns no one, and if in everything he examines his soul, so that he will remember that at some time he has to come face to face with God, then the fear of God will come to him."

Hypothesis XV

It is essential for those who have abandoned the world not to communicate with their relatives according to the flesh or to nurture the slightest interest in them.

A. From Palladios

1. A man named Pior, who was from Egypt and young in age, renounced the world and left his father's house out of exceedingly great love for God. He made a promise to God that he would never again see any of his relatives or friends.

Then, after fifty years, his sister, when she had grown old, learned from someone that her brother was alive, and she was seized by an extremely strong desire to see him. However, since she was unable to go into the depths of the desert, she passionately implored the Bishop of the region to write to the holy men there and ask them to send her brother into the city, so that she might see him. Since they urged him greatly, Pior was obedient to the Fathers and, taking with him, as a companion, an ascetic, he set off for the city.

As soon as he arrived at the house, his sister was informed: "Your brother Pior has arrived." Realizing that his sister was coming out to meet him, he closed his eyes and called out to her: "My sister, I am Pior, your brother. It is I. See me and look as much as you wish." Confirming that he was indeed her brother, she glorified God. But in spite of her every effort, she was unable to persuade him to come into the house. After having blessed her from the doorstep, he departed again for the desert.

2. There once came a message to the Blessed Evagrios the Deacon—that his father had died. He thus replied to the messenger: "Stop blaspheming; my Father is immortal."

B. From the Life of St. Pachomios

Learning of the virtuous state of St. Pachomios, his sister in the flesh went to the monastery, desiring to see him. As soon as St. Pachomios

heard of this, he sent the doorkeeper to say to her: "So, then, you have learned of me, that I am alive. Go, therefore, and do not grieve that I will not see you. If you wish to imitate this life of mine yourself, so that we might both find mercy from God, consider it. If you so like, the brothers will build you a cell, so that you can live a life of silence, alone. Perhaps the Lord will call yet other women to you, and they, too, will be saved on your account. Indeed, man experiences no other satisfaction on earth, except that of doing good and what is pleasing to God." Thus the sister of St. Pachomios, as soon as she received this answer, wept and was touched, and dedicated her heart to her salvation.

When St. Pachomios learned of her eagerness, he glorified God and gave an order to the most pious of the brothers to build her a small cell far from the monastery. Thus she struggled in God. In the meantime, many other women gathered around her. The number of women coming forward increased daily; for the care of these, she was appointed spiritual Mother, and she taught them, showing to all the road of salvation. Subsequently, St. Pachomios appointed a very elderly and pious man, named Peter, to serve them. He drew up monastic canons for them as well, that they might conform their lives to them and follow the way of life established by God.

Some time later, the mother of Theodore, one of the brothers, visited the convent of St. Pachomios' sister. St. Pachomios the Great loved Theodore, this brother, very much, because he had come to know his great and wondrous obedience and his shining asceticism. Now, Theodore's mother, after searching for him everywhere and learning that he was near there, arrived at the convent, bringing with her letters from Bishops, which commanded that her child be yielded to her. She was received with hospitality at the women's hermitage, and from there sent her letters to Pachomios, passionately entreating him to allow her to see her son.

The Great Pachomios summoned Theodore and said to him:

"My child, your mother has come and wishes to see you. Indeed, she has brought us letters from Bishops, as well. Go, therefore, and comfort her, particularly for the sake of the holy men who ask this of us in their letters."

Theodore answered St. Pachomios the Great:

"Reassure me, my Father, that if I see her after all that I have learned, the Lord will not ask me to give an account at the Second Coming, since I will become a scandal to the brothers by meeting again with my mother, after having left her for so many years. For if the sons of Levi, who

lived before Grace, ignored their parents and their brothers in order to keep the law of God, should I, whom God has made worthy of such great Grace, prefer parents or relatives over the love of God? Indeed, the Lord has said: 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me' [St. Matthew 10:37]."

"If your conscience assures you that it is not in your best interest, my son, I will not force you," answered St. Pachomios the Great. "This is indeed the task of all those who have totally abandoned the world and have renounced themselves entirely. In other words, monks necessarily avoid worldly contacts, which are unprofitable. Those who are members of Christ and serve Him with perfect self-denial, all of these members they should love equally. If someone tries to force himself to do otherwise, or tries to rationalize this by saying, 'My relatives are my flesh and I love them,' let him heed the Holy Scriptures, which say: '[F]or of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage' [II St. Peter 2:19]."

Theodore thus wished not to meet with his mother. So, she decided to remain in the convent, along with the sisters, who were virgins in Christ, thinking that: "If God wills, I will see him sometime with the brothers and, on account of him, I will save my soul." In this way, it is possible that Godly strictness, when undertaken for the glory of God, can benefit those who endure it, even if, for the moment, it appears to cause them distress.

C. From the life of St. Symeon [the Stylite] of the *Mandra*

Twenty-seven years had passed since the time that this supernatural man, St. Symeon the Great, had renounced the laws of nature and all the things of the world. His mother, not being able in any other way to extinguish the flames of love and affection she yet maintained within herself and in her heart for him, set off to see her fleshless son in the flesh; for she was compelled by the desire to see the face of her child and to hear his voice, of which she had been deprived for so long a time.

When St. Symeon the Great learned of his mother's approach, he was careful to see that he balanced his commitment to the honor owed his mother against the prohibitory commandment—he who was so strict with regard to the law.

He refused to meet with her, but at the same time he sent her a message: "My mother, if you think it right, let us forestall the joy of seeing one another until the future age; most certainly, if we live in this world

as God would want, we will know each other with greater intimacy and deeper recognition when we leave it."

This, then, was the advice that St. Symeon the Great sent to his mother. However, because the flame which dwelled in her heart did not allow her to understand the deeper meaning of what was said, she persisted and continued to desire to see him. Then her blessed son informed her: "My mother, I had thought that you would assent to that which is best for both of us, and that you would not insist on our meeting here. However, since I see that your desire is more base, let me tell you that for the present I must keep silence; but I will see you in a short while, for this is the Will of God."

The mother therefore accepted the promise with great pleasure. Her spirit soared from her joy. The hope of their meeting made her rejoice and cheered her up. This anticipation of future happiness entirely engrossed her, and she practically saw her child before her, thinking that she was embracing him, kissing him, and hearing his voice. But before these things could happen, she died suddenly, and her soul went to be with God—for she was truly a blessed woman and worthy of a most blessed end. Though a mother, in this case she obeyed her son, whom, in the end, she left to the attainment of wondrous heights of virtue. The Divine Symeon gave orders that the dead body of his mother be brought inside the *mandra* (this is what the enclosure around the column on which he stood was called), since a wall had been built around the column, so as not to allow the entrance of women. When the dead woman had been brought into the courtyard, he saw her, in keeping with the promise he had made her, though she was dead. Having prayed for her, he buried her there next to the column.

In this way, St. Symeon brought honor upon his mother and not only simply fulfilled the Master's commandment, but through his arduous efforts gave it new dimensions.

D. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother, who had left his native place to live as a stranger and one unknown, consulted an Elder:

"Father," he said to him, "I want to return to my homeland."

"This you should know, my brother," answered the Elder. "When you came here (to the desert) from your village, you had the Lord as a guide. If you turn back, however, you will not have Him any longer."

2. A monk who was hurrying to the city asked for the blessing of an Elder:

"Do not be in a hurry to go into the city," the Elder answered him, "but earnestly try to avoid the city, and you will be saved."

3. A very devout monk had a very poor mother in the city.

Now, during a time of great famine he therefore took with him loaves of bread and set out to give them to his mother. But as he was on his way, he heard a voice saying to him: "Is it you who takes care of your mother or I?" The monk, understanding the Divine power of the voice, fell face down to the ground and said: "Thou, O Lord, providest for us." Then he immediately arose and returned to his cell.

After three days his mother visited him and said to him:

"That monk whom we know gave us a little wheat. Take it and make a few little loaves of bread, that we might be nourished."

As soon as the monk heard his mother's words, he glorified God and, enriching his heart with good hope, progressed, with the Grace of God, in every virtue.

4. A monk who lived in the skete had a son in the village. Once, his son was arrested by the authorities. The mother of the boy informed the monk of this and begged him to write to the Governor in order to gain his freedom. When he received this notice, the monk asked the messenger:

"If my son is released, will they not imprison someone else in his place?"

"Most certainly," he answered.

"Then what is the profit" the monk once again asked, "if with his release I put joy in the heart of his mother and relieve her sorrow, but bring sorrow to the heart of another?"

5. This same Elder worked a great deal and made handcrafts. He kept only what was enough for his needs; the rest he distributed among the poor. Once, a great famine fell upon the region where he was, and the mother sent the monk's son to him, imploring the monk to give him some bread. The Elder, as soon as he had heard the request, said to his son:

"Are there others in the village who suffer as much as you do?"

"Certainly. There are many," the son answered.

The Elder, closing the door, said with tears in his eyes:

"Go my child. He Who provides for the others will provide for you also."

A certain monk, who was an eyewitness to this incident, asked the Elder:

"Father, are you not distressed at the thought that you sent away your child with empty hands?"

"If a man does not struggle and force himself in all things," answered the Elder, "he will receive no reward from God."

6. There once lived a monk who had a very poor brother living in the world. All that the monk earned from his labors he gave to his brother. However, the more the monk gave him, the poorer the recipient became. The monk went to relate this incident to an Elder. After listening with great attention, the Elder said to him:

"My brother, if you want to heed me, then never give him anything more. When he comes to ask something of you, say to him, 'When I had something, I gave it to you. Now, you should bring to me whatever you are able to spare from your work.' Whatever he brings you, take it, and when you meet a stranger or a poor Elder, give it to him, entreating him to pray for your brother in the world."

The monk left, having resolved to put into practice the Elder's advice. So, as soon as his worldly brother came, he told him everything that the Elder had advised. The brother heard this and departed in sorrow. Nonetheless, he worked his first day and, from his efforts, brought to the monk a few greens. As soon as he received them, the monk gave them to the Elders and asked them to pray for his brother. Then, having received the blessings of the Elders, the brother departed for his home.

After a few days, the worldly brother came again to the monk and brought him a cabbage and three loaves of bread. When the monk took them, he did as before. His brother, having received the blessings of the Elders, left. Later, he came a third time and brought many foodstuffs—even wine and fish! When the monk saw these, he was astonished. He called together the poor and, with charity, alleviated their misfortune. To his worldly brother he said:

"Perhaps you have need of a little bread?"

"No, my Lord," he answered. "As many times as I took even the least thing from you, your gift would come into my house like fire, so that even what little I had vanished. Since I am no longer taking anything from you, however, God blesses me."

After hearing these words of his worldly brother, the monk went to

the Elder and related to him the incident in its entirety. Then the Elder said to him:

"Are you not aware that the work of a monk is fire that burns wherever it goes? Moreover, it benefits your worldly brother to offer charity from his labors and to take blessings from holy men. In this way, he is blessed by God."

7. Once the mother of Abba Mark, a disciple of Abba Silouan, went to see the Abba, accompanied by a large entourage. Abba Silouan came out of his cell to meet her, and she then said to him:

"Abba, tell my son to come out of his cell, so that I may see him."

Abba Silouan entered the cell and told his disciple:

"Come out, so that your mother might see you." (At that moment, Abba Mark was wearing an apron and was all dirty from the smoke of the kitchen.) Indeed, to be obedient, he went out, but closed his eyes, saying to his visitors, "May you be saved,"* though without seeing them. His mother, however, did not recognize him. She therefore sent a second time for the Elder, beseeching him:

"Abba, send me my son, that I may see him."

Abba Silouan called his disciple, Abba Mark, and said to him:

"Did I not tell you a short while ago to go out, so that your mother might see you?"

"But Elder," he answered. "I did as you asked. I went out and told them, 'May you be saved.' I only beseech you, do not make me go out yet another time, for I will be forced to disobey."

Then the Elder himself went outside and told the mother: "Your son was he who just a moment ago came out. He met you and said, 'May you be saved.'" Having thus advised her, he gave her leave.

8. Once a number of hermits went to see Abba Poimen. At the same time, a relative of Abba Poimen also went with the hermits, taking with him his child. The head of his child was, by satanic operation, turned around, backwards. The relative sat down with his son outside the monastery, weeping.

One of the Elders happened to come out of the monastery and, seeing this man crying, said to him:

"Man, why are you crying?"

"I am a relative of Abba Poimen," he answered, "and this temptation has befallen my son, as you see. I wanted, therefore, to take him to the Elder; but I was afraid that he would not want to see us. And even now,

if he learns that we are here, he will send to have us expelled. But I, as soon as I saw you, took heart from your presence and have dared to approach. If you will, then, Abba, have mercy on me and take in my child and pray for him."

The Elder was indeed moved and, taking the child, entered the monastery. He acted, however, with prudence; he did not take him straightaway to Abba Poimen, but began with the younger monks: "Make the sign of the Cross over this sick child," he said to each of them. After they had all in turn made the sign of the Cross over the child, the Elder then also took him to Abba Poimen, who did not want, however, even to touch him. But all of the Fathers begged him fervently, saying:

"Abba, as all the Fathers have done, make the sign of the Cross over him yourself."

Then Abba Poimen sighed and said: "My God, heal Thy creature, that he might not be totally enslaved by the Enemy." And after they had made the sign of the Cross over him, the boy was thereafter immediately healed. Thus, they forthwith joyfully returned him healthy to his father.

E. Abba Isaiah

If you should distance yourself from your relatives in the flesh in order to become a stranger for the sake of God, do not let your soul feel sweet satisfaction from your memory of them when sitting in your cell. Do not grieve for your father or your mother, and do not remember your brother or your sister. Do not entertain longing for your children and do not desire your wife, since you have left all of that. Bring to mind the moment when you will leave this world and the awesome agony of death, during which none of these will then be able to help you. Why, then, not leave them behind for the sake of virtue? If there should arise a need to visit your homeland for some reason, protect yourself from your relatives in the flesh; do not dare to venture among them, or even to converse with them.

F. From the *Gerontikon*

One of the Fathers said of Abba Poimen and his brothers that, living in Egypt, their mother, who desired to see them, was not able to do so. One day, however, she kept watch out for them and, as they were leaving for Church, went to meet them. As soon as they recognized her, they

immediately turned back and closed the door in her face. So, she stood outside the door and, with tears and pain, cried out to them:

"My beloved children," she said to them, "I want to see you."

While they were inside the cell, listening to her, Abba Anoub at one point said to Abba Poimen:

"What are we going to do with that old woman, crying as she is outside the door?"

Then Abba Poimen went and, standing inside near the door, said to her:

"Why are you shouting so, old woman?"

As soon as she heard the voice of her child, she began to shout all the more and said tearfully:

"My children, I want to see you. What will it hurt if I see you? Am I not your mother? Did I not nurse you at my breast? I am old and gray. Take pity on my old age and thus let me see you, if only for a short while, so as to extinguish a bit the flame in my heart; for I burn greatly with the desire to see you—and more so now, my child, that I have heard your voice."

Then Abba Poimen asked her:

"Do you want to see us now or in the other world?"

"If I do not see you here," answered the mother, "will I see you at least in the other world?"

"If you force yourself and do not see us here, then most certainly you will see us in the other world."

As soon as the Abbas' mother heard this, she left straightway with joy and said: "If I am to see you everlastingly there, then I do not want to see you here."

G. St. Gregory the Dialogist

A monk from St. Benedict's monastery was possessed by the demon of neglect, since he allowed his thoughts freedom and had no desire at all to follow the very strict tradition of the monastic canon. But the man of God, St. Benedict, never ceased to chastise him and did not neglect to counsel him continuously. This monk, however, not only did not want to obey the admonitions of the Father, but also would not stop his shameless entreaties that the Saint let him leave and return to his parents.

One day, therefore, the venerable Father became so annoyed by the monk's persistent begging that, in anger, he ordered him to leave the

monastery. As soon as the monk left the monastery to set off for his parents, he immediately encountered an immense dragon in the road, its mouth open and ready to swallow him. The brother began to tremble from his anxiety, to wave his arms, and to shout with desperation: "Hurry, a dragon wants to swallow me."

The brothers indeed ran out, but nowhere saw a dragon, finding only the brother trembling and waving his arms in desperation. In this wretched state, they led him back to the monastery. As soon as he had recovered from his terror, he immediately promised never again to leave the monastery by his own will and never, under any circumstances whatever to depart therefrom, until his death. Indeed, he kept his promises to the end and, strengthened by the prayers of the holy Fathers, never again saw the fearful dragon which had once stood before him.

* "May you be saved" was a greeting which monastics and pious laypeople used to address to each other in that era, and it signifies a prayerful appeal for the salvation of the person being greeted. And indeed, what more expressive prayer is there than this, whereby one prays for the salvation of the soul of one's interlocutor? What comparison is there between this greeting and today's "Good Morning" or even "Hello," which is a passing wish, whereas this is a wish for eternal salvation? If only this greeting would return to use today.

Hypothesis XVI

We must love our relatives in the flesh equally with our other brothers, as long as our relatives lead a similar kind of life; if, however, they conduct themselves in a way discordant with that of our brothers, we must avoid them as harmful.

A. From the Life of St. Pachomios

Many years after Theodore had forsaken the world to become a monk, and had proven to be the most assiduous disciple of St. Pachomios, Paphnoutios, Theodore's brother, went to the monastery, asking to become a monk himself. Theodore did not want to treat him as his brother (because he had totally cast off from himself the old man), and for this reason Paphnoutios was very distressed and wept constantly. Being informed of this, St. Pachomios met with Theodore and said to him:

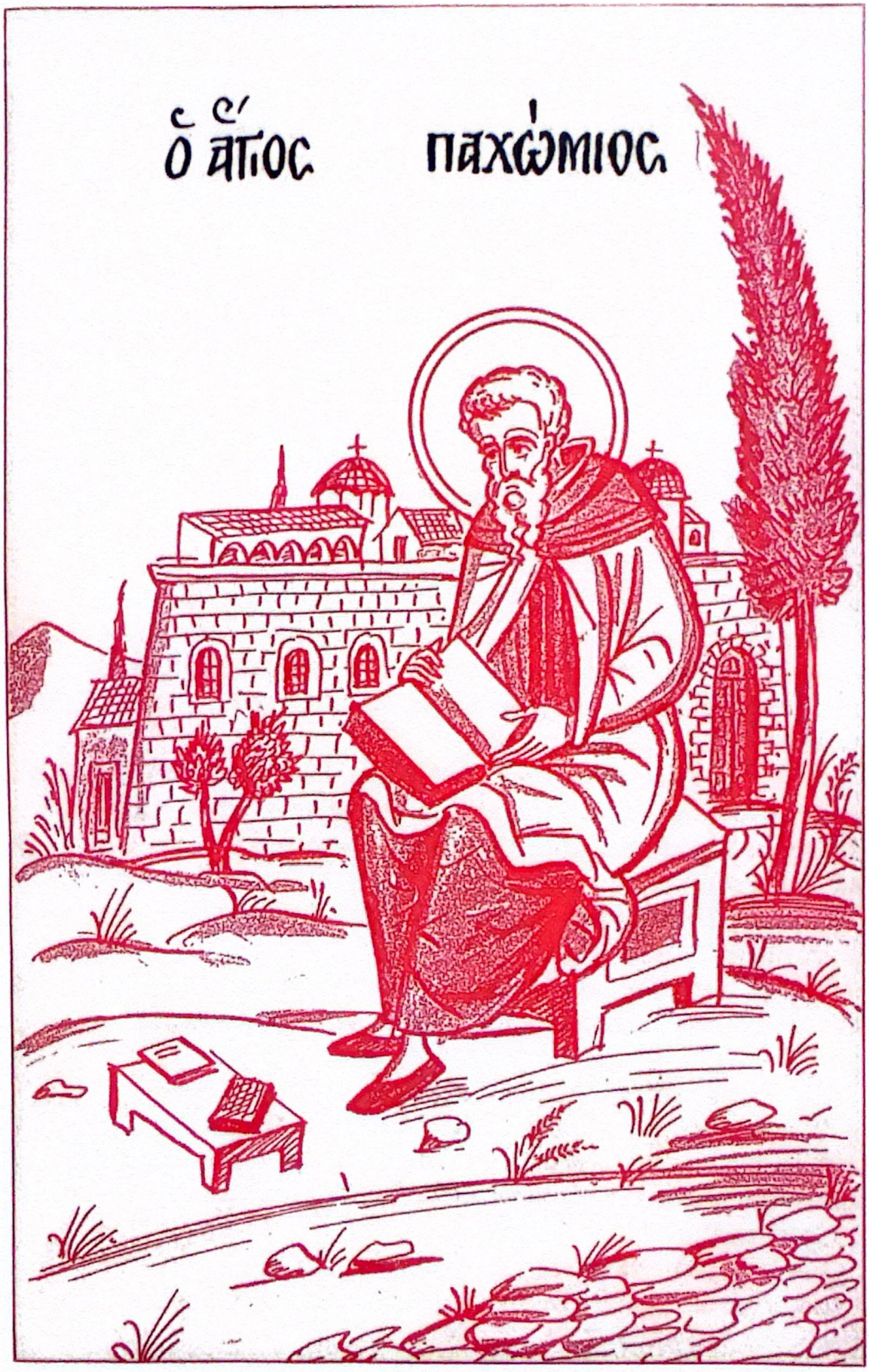
"My brother, there is no harm, in the beginning, in accommodating someone newly arrived here; for, as a newly planted tree requires a great deal of water, so too is consideration required for one who is beginning the ascetic life, until he can, by the Grace of God, establish roots and support himself in the Faith."

Having heard this, Theodore eagerly obeyed the Father—since he had always obeyed him as a matter of principle—and supported his brother in all things, since he well understood everything that St. Pachomios the Great had told him.

B. From the Life of St. Ioannikios

The daughter of a Senator fell ill, and her limbs became paralyzed. This young girl was pious and had embraced Christianity. The husband of the Saint's sister, on the other hand, was possessed by hatred for the Holy Icons of Christ.

The moment the blessed one came to her, the Senator's daughter was healed from her frightful disease by his prayers and the sign of the Cross. But the Saint's brother-in-law, whom he was unable to influence



St. Pachomios

by his counsel or deliver from his mania, reached the point of needing punishment. Overlooking his feelings as a relative and ignoring, for the sake of piety, his own flesh and blood, by his prayers he brought blindness on his impious brother-in-law. Thus, strong reverence of God can overcome even nature itself, and a true desire for God can become even stronger than the constraints of family.

This we see in St. Ioannikios, who healed the Senator's daughter, even though she was not his relative, because she revered the Christian Faith. The other individual, however, because he warred against the Holy Icons, he deprived of his sight, despite the fact that he was the Saint's brother-in-law, and with the punishment of blind eyes showed him how rightly the eyes of the soul see.

C. From the *Gerontikon*

A pious man, who loved the Godly life and who was called Karion, having heard of and marvelled at the blessed life of the ascetics, was obsessed with a desire for this life and went on his own to Sketis. This Karion also had a son in the flesh named Zacharias, whom he took with him to the skete and there reared him. Of course everyone there knew that he was really his son.

Now, when Zacharias, Karion's son, reached the age of adolescence, he began to cause scandal for many of the monks, who grumbled quite a bit about Zacharias. As soon as Abba Karion was informed of this, he said to his son:

"Get up, Zacharias, so we can leave from here, since the Fathers are complaining."

"Abba, everyone here knows that I am your son," said Zacharias. "However, if we go somewhere else, they will not know that I am your son."

The Elder persisted and said to him:

"Get up. Let us go to the Thebaid.* And so, they went there. A few days after being established in their cell, however, murmuring once again began among the Fathers, on account of the boy.

So Abba Karion said again to his son:

"Get up Zacharias. Let us go to the skete."

But there also, as soon as they went, the Fathers again began to murmur because of the boy.

Thereupon Zacharias went to the lake of Nitron** and, after taking off his clothes, immersed himself in the waters up to his nose. He stayed

in the water of the lake as long as he could, until his body had become unsightly (because from the slaked lime in the lake he became as one with leprosy).*** Coming out of the lake, he put on his garments and went to his father. The change which he had undergone was such that even his father could recognize him only with difficulty.

When, according to monastic custom, Zacharias went to the Church at Sketis in order to receive the Most Pure Mysteries, it was revealed to Abba Isidore, the Presbyter of the skete, what had happened. As soon as he saw the boy, he marvelled and said:

"The adolescent Zacharias came last Sunday to receive Communion as a human. Now, however, he has become an Angel."

* Upper Egypt was called the "Thebaid" [sometimes spelled "Thebaïd," but more commonly just "Thebaid"—*Trans.*], after the name of the ancient city of Thebes. The ruins of this city are preserved to this day under the names of "Luxor" and "Karnak."

** The lake of Nitron is a lake in Upper Egypt, which fills up when the Nile floods, but dries up when the waters recede, thick layers of salt and saltpeter (sodium nitrate) being formed therein. There are other, similar lakes in this "*wadi*" [a desert valley—*Trans.*], for which reason the region was called "Nitria" in ancient times (today it is called "Wadi el Natrun") and was a refuge for many anchorites.

*** This happened because the salt and the saltpeter, which had dissolved in the water of the lake, damaged or consumed his skin.

Hypothesis XVII

How he who becomes a monk must bare himself of all things, and how he must dispose of everything which belongs to him. That the existence of personal property for a monk in a cœnobitic monastery is clearly disastrous.

A. From St. Barsanouphios

A brother visited an Elder and asked him:

"Father, my relatives owe me a small sum and I want to get it, so that I might give it to the poor. Since they show no readiness to return it to me soon, what should I do?"

The Elder answered him:

"If you do not cast off this carnal mentality, and acquire a bit of the indifference allowed by God, then there is a danger that you may fall to wishing to please men."

B. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother, having renounced the world to become a monk, distributed his belongings to the poor, but kept a little for himself. He then went to St. Anthony and requested that he make him a monk.

St. Anthony, however, learning that this monastic candidate had kept a little money from what he had, said to him:

"If you wish to become a monk, go to that village over there and buy some meat. Afterwards, when you have taken off your clothes, put the meat on your naked body like a garment, and then in this manner come here."

Indeed, the brother did as St. Anthony the Great had proposed. As he was returning, however, naked and holding the meat on his shoulders, the dogs and birds, wanting to grab the meat, tore apart his body. In this condition, then, he returned to the Elder, showing him his body, torn up by dog bites and the pecking of the birds. On seeing him, St. Anthony told him:

"The same thing happens to those who abandon the world but want to have money; the demons make war against them and cut them up

into pieces."

2. Abba Isidore said that the passion of greed is frightful and dares to do anything; it is never satisfied with what it might acquire and leads the soul of which it has taken possession to the greatest of all evils. Let us, then, from the very beginning drive it away with all our might; for if it prevails in our soul, it becomes incapable of being subjugated.

3. A man once wanted to abandon the world and become a monk. He therefore visited a great Elder and said to him:

"Father, I want to become a monk."

"If you wish this," answered the Elder, "go first and abandon all the things of the world, and when you come back sit in your cell and maintain silence."

Indeed, the monastic candidate went to his village, distributed all that he had, after keeping for himself one hundred coins, and went again to the Elder. The Elder said:

"You are not capable of becoming a monk."

"Yes, Elder, I am able to become one," he answered.

"Then go and sit in your cell," the Abba advised him.

So, he went and ensconced himself in his cell. After he had been silent a few days, his thoughts told him: "The door of your cell is old and needs to be changed." He therefore went to the Elder and said to him:

"Father, my thoughts are telling me that the door of my cell is old and needs to be changed."

The Elder then answered him:

"You have not abandoned the world. Go and reject it totally and then come to stay here."

Starting anew, the novice monk went off again and gave away the ninety coins he had left. Having returned, he said to the Elder:

"Behold, Elder, now I have renounced the world."

The Elder again gave him leave, and the brother went and sat in his cell. As soon as he sat, however, his thoughts began to tempt him again and to say to him: "Everything here is old. This place is dilapidated and a lion will come and eat me." Immediately he went to the Elder and confessed his thoughts. Then the Elder answered him:

"And you, my child, should say to your thoughts: 'I am anxiously awaiting all things to befall me: for my cell to cave in and for a lion to come to eat me, so that I might be delivered all the sooner from this world.' Say this, then, to your thoughts, and go sit in your cell without

fearing or attending to anything. Only pray continuously to God."

The brother followed the advice of the Elder and, indeed, his soul was immediately put at ease.

4. A young man desired to renounce and abandon the world, and many times set off to fulfill his desire. However, as soon as he would get outside the city to leave for the monastery, his decision would be overturned by thoughts suggesting to him that he supposedly had first to take care of certain necessary matters, since this young man was also wealthy.

Now, one day he undertook anew to fulfill his desire and resolutely departed from the city. As usual, however, he was again possessed by temptations, which, in order to obstruct him and make him turn back, darkened his mind with sundry thoughts. As soon as he realized the warring force of these thoughts, and having no other way in which to react against them, he started to undress and to cast off from himself all his clothes, running naked to reach the monastery quickly.

God then revealed to an Elder, who knew the youth and to whom he was so furiously running, the youth's intentions, and said to him: "Arise, in order to welcome My athlete." Indeed, the Elder went out of his cell to go meet the youth. When he learned of the entire matter, he welcomed the victor with kindness and immediately deemed him worthy of the monastic *schema* [habit—*Trans.*]. After this, whenever monks would visit the Elder to ask him about their temptations, he would answer accordingly, if the thoughts concerned other matters; but if they referred to matters of renouncing the world, he would send them over to his disciple and say to them: "Ask the brother about these matters."

5. Once a monk became ill. The Abbot from a neighboring monastery took him in and looked after him, since the sick man did not have even the most basic means for taking care of his needs. The Abbot told his disciples: "Weary yourselves a bit, so that we might take care of this sick man." Now, the sick man had a pot full of gold coins; so, he dug a hole underneath the straw mattress upon which he lay, and there he hid the pot. After a short while, he died, without saying anything, during his last moments, about the hidden treasure.

As soon as they had buried him, the Abbot said to the monks:

"Now take the straw mattress away from here."

However, as the monks were gathering up the mattress, they found buried there the pot with the gold coins. It was easily seen because of the

hole which it made. Astonished, they took it to the Abbot.

When the Abbot saw the small treasure and learned how it was found, he said to his monks:

"Since this monk never revealed anything about the gold, neither while he lived nor while he was dying, but built all his hopes on it, I will not touch it at all. Take it, as it is, and bury it in the grave along with the dead man."

The monks carried out the command of the Abbot. And as they were returning from the grave, they saw fire falling from the skies onto the tomb; this lasted for several days without ceasing, until the fire had eaten up even the rocks and the dirt of the grave, and everything that was in the tomb.

When they saw this frightful sight, the monks were astonished and marvelled.

Hypothesis XVIII

It is necessary for one who wishes to be saved to seek the company of virtuous people and, as a thing much beneficial, to question them with exceeding desire and flaming zeal, so as to learn from them all those things which are essential for the salvation of the soul.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Palladios said: "The soul which conducts itself in a Godly way must either learn with sincerity what it does not know or must teach with clarity whatever it has learned. If it does not desire to do either of these two things, then it is possessed by madness; for the beginning of apostasy is found in the absence of instructive words and in the lack of a desire for instruction, since the soul which loves God is always hungry for the word of God."

2. A brother asked an Elder:

"Abba, I beseech the Elders, and they teach me about my soul; but I apply nothing of their words. To what end, therefore, should I keep asking them, since I do nothing? I am totally filthy."

Close by there were two empty vessels. After the Elder had listened to the monk, he said to him:

"Go, take one of these vessels and put oil in it; afterwards wash it out, turn it over, and put it back in its place."

Indeed, the brother did what the Elder had suggested, washing the vessel once, and even a second time. The vessel having been cleansed of the oil, the brother put it back where it had previously been. After this the Elder said to him:

"Now bring me the two together and take care to see which is the cleaner."

The brother, after inspecting them, said:

"The one in which I just put the oil is cleaner."

Then, in conclusion, the Elder advised him:

"The same thing happens with the soul: even if nothing is retained and nothing of what is said is understood—something which I do not

believe, anyway—it is cleaned much more than the soul of one who asks nothing at all."

3. Abba Palladios said: More than a well-lighted window, a man must seek after the company of holy men, so that he can see his heart, as if reading a clearly written book, and thus come to perceive the idleness in his way of life by contrast with their lives. For many are the traits of virtuous men which bear witness to the purity of their souls—such as the subtle look that a Godly way of life imprints on the face, the style of dress, the simplicity of character, humility in discourse, the absence of an inquisitive tone in their words, the prudence of their expressions, the piety of their manner. All of these things benefit greatly those who attend to them and engrave on their souls the immutable archetypes of virtue.

4. A brother asked an Elder:

"Father, what is more desirable, for one to visit the Elders or for one to keep silence in his cell?"

"Visiting the Elders," he answered, "was the rule of the ancient Fathers."

5. Once a brother visited Abba John the Short late in the afternoon, and was in a hurry to leave. However, when he began to discuss with the Elder things profitable to the soul, he became so engrossed that the entire night passed, and dawn came without their realizing it. Abba John went out with his visitor, in order to escort him away. But they remained there conversing until the sixth hour.* So, the Elder took the brother back to his cell, and, after they had eaten, the brother left alone.

6. Abba Cassian told the following story: Once an Elder lived in solitude as a monk in the desert, beseeching God to grant him the following gift: that whenever a spiritual and edifying conversation was in progress, he would not grow sleepy; but whenever someone spoke idly or gossiped, a deep sleep would come upon him, so that his hearing would not be touched by the poison of those words. And, indeed, that which he asked, God gave him. Now, this virtuous Elder used to say that the Devil is a fashioner of idle talk and an enemy of every spiritual teaching. He confirmed this point with the following example:

"Once I was talking with some brothers who were visiting me about various spiritual matters beneficial to the soul. My listeners grew so

sleepy that they could not even move their eyelids. Seeing this deep sleepiness, I wanted to show them that this was an obvious operation of the Devil. I began idly to discuss various things. As soon as those with whom I was conversing heard this aimless talk, they immediately came out of their slumber and joyfully began to follow the conversation. So, I sighed," continued the Elder, "and said to my fellow conversants: 'Brothers, when we were talking of heavenly things, your eyes were overcome by sleep. But as soon as vain and unedifying talk came up, then all of you eagerly woke up. I implore you, then, my brothers: Reflect well on the action of the evil demon and be careful for yourselves, protecting yourselves from drowsiness whenever you do or hear something spiritual.'"

7. Once Abba Poimen, when he was younger, went to an Elder to ask him about three thoughts. When he arrived at the Elder's, he forgot one of them and asked only about the other two. Having listened to the appropriate counsel, he returned to his cell. However, as soon as he put his hand on the key to open the door, he remembered the thought he had forgotten and went back to the Elder. When the Elder saw him, he was somewhat surprised. "My brother, you have come back very quickly." Then Abba Poimen told the Elder: "As soon as I took out the key to open the door of my cell, I remembered the thought about which I sought to inquire, and without opening my cell I came straightway here." (And the distance was great.) The Elder said to him: "Poimen! Poimen of the Angels! Your name will be proclaimed throughout Egypt."

8. Three Fathers had the custom of going each year to the Blessed Anthony; and of these three, two would ask the great Anthony about various thoughts and about how they might succeed in saving their souls, while the third remained silent, not saying anything. Thus, after they had visited St. Anthony the Great many times—during which visits this brother had been continuously silent, asking nothing—St. Anthony one day asked him:

"You've been coming here for so long. Why do you not ask me anything?"

"For me it is enough just to see you, Father," answered the quiet brother.

9. Abba Paphnoutios said that as long as the Elders were alive, he

would visit them twice a month. His cell was twelve miles distant from them. During these visits, he would confess his thoughts. In response, they would always tell him the same thing:

"Wherever you may go, Paphnoutios, take no thought of yourself, and you will find peace."

10. It is said of an Elder that for seventy weeks he ate only once a week. During this period, he asked God to show him the meaning of a phrase of Holy Scripture. But God would not reveal it to him. He said to himself, therefore: "I have expended so much effort and accomplished nothing. I will go to my brother and ask him." As he was closing the door of his cell, so that he could go to the brother, an Angel of the Lord was sent to him. He said to the monk:

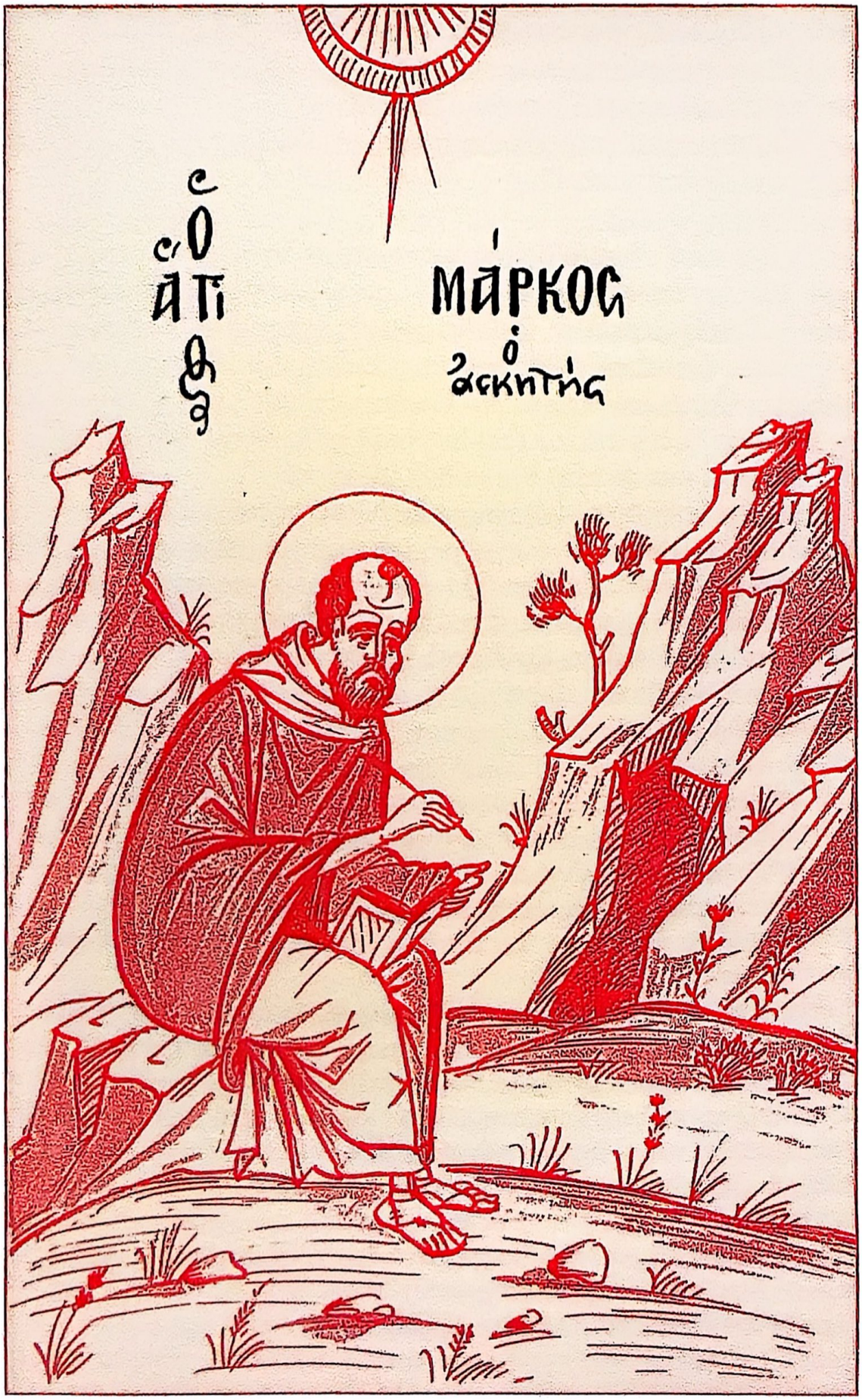
"The seventy weeks during which you fasted did not reach God. But when you humbled yourself and thought to visit your brother, then God sent me to you, that I might show you the meaning of the saying about which you asked." And so, having informed the monk about all the things he had asked, the Angel departed.

B. From Abba Mark

A man advises his neighbor in accordance with what his neighbor knows. Correspondingly, God acts on one who hears Him according to the degree of his faith. A man of forbearance becomes wise, just as does he who is careful to listen to words of wisdom. Do not refuse to learn, even if you are very wise, for the Providence of God avails more than our wisdom.

He who wishes to take up the Cross and follow Christ must, before acquiring any other knowledge or learning, attend to the constant examination of his thoughts and take care for his soul's salvation, eagerly consulting with those servants of God who are of like mind and spirit, who fight the same fight, so that he will not be in danger of walking without a bright lamp in the darkness, ignorant of where he is going and how he will get there. For he who walks according to his desires, without knowledge of the Gospel and discretion and without the guidance of another, stumbles frequently and falls into the many pits and traps of the Evil One. The same falls prey to divers deceptions, toiling greatly but falling into various dangers, not knowing what will be his end.

Indeed, many have endured great toils and numberless ascetic feats



St. Mark the Ascetic

and have suffered much ill treatment and many hardships for God; despite this, however, their self-styled life, lack of discretion, and neglect of what was best for their neighbor have caused all of their labors to be worthless and, in the end, a waste of effort. To avoid this danger, therefore, it is good for a man to live with another, or at least to make an effort to keep the company of knowledgeable people and to try not to walk in darkness—associating, of necessity, if one lacks the lamp of true knowledge, with someone who possesses that lamp. Thus he avoids the danger of falling into traps and snares or succumbing to spiritual beasts, which seek their sustenance in the dark and which grab and tear to pieces those who walk in this darkness without the intelligible lamp of the Divine *Logos*.

C. From Abba Isaac the Syrian

Always, and in all matters, believe yourself to be in need of learning, and throughout the whole of your life you will be shown to be wise.

D. From St. Maximos

Just as parents have a great yearning and love for their children, in the same way the mind, by its nature, considers its thoughts important. And just as those parents who nurture their children with a sick kind of love see their children as more accomplished and more beautiful than others—even if everyone else considers them the most ignorant and the most ridiculous of children—so, too, do fools see their own words, even if everyone else considers the words of a foolish man most ignorant. Despite this, the fool himself sees his words as the most intelligent of all. The same does not apply to the words of the wise man, however. When he seeks to determine if his words are beneficial and true, first of all he does not trust in his own judgement, but appoints other men—wise men—the judges of his words and thoughts, so that he does not chance to work and toil without purpose; and from these judges he is assured of the worth of his words.

E. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder said: "Whoever goes into a perfume shop, even if he buys nothing, will without fail take upon himself its fragrance. In this manner exactly, one who visits the Fathers is benefited. If he should

wish to work, they show him the path of humility, which becomes for him a protective wall repelling the incursion of the demons.

2. Once a brother visited Abba Felix, accompanied by some laymen who were living in the world. He asked the Abba to tell them a word of benefit to the soul. But the Elder kept silent. Since, however, the brother persistently continued to question him, Abba Felix said at last:

"Do you want to hear a word?"

"Yes, Abba," answered the visitors.

"Now a 'word' no longer exists," said the Abba, "because when the brothers would ask the Elders and apply that which the Elders told them, then God would send a word for the spiritual benefit of those asking. But now, since the brothers ask, but do not apply what they hear, God has taken away the gift of words from the Elders, and they cannot find any words to say, since there is no one to actualize virtuous words."

As soon as the visitors heard this, they sighed and said:

"Abba, pray for us."

F. From St. Ephraim

Never refuse the counsel of Holy men, even if you are learned; for this, too, is one of the fruits of knowledge.

G. From Abba Isaac

Do not ask to receive advice from someone who does not have experience with the type of life you live, even if that person is very wise. It is preferable to entrust your problems to an individual who has experience in such matters than to a philosopher, who speaks with logic based on a theoretical examination of matters, without, however, having experience of them. For the experienced do not enter into the nature of things and examine various aspects of an issue, without yet having received knowledge from direct dealings with it; an experienced person feels directly the benefit and harm of things, having spent a lot of time involved in them. Indeed, in many cases something may seem to be damaging, but may have a great benefit hidden inside. And conversely, other times something may externally seem full of benefits, and yet may be totally harmful internally. For this reason, many people have been harmed a great deal by things which only appear to be of profit.

Thus, you should use as an advisor him who from experience

knows well the nature and strengths of various things and who is in a good position to discern, without erring, their benefit or harm.

One who has successfully come to control the spirit of independence in himself is the most worthy of trust in prudently imparting such control to others.

* The twelfth hour, according to the Byzantine reckoning of time, is always sunset, while the sixth hour is six hours before, or noon.

Hypothesis XIX

Regarding the necessity of obedience: what benefits arise from it and how a man accomplishes it.

A. From the Life of St. Theodosios the Abbot

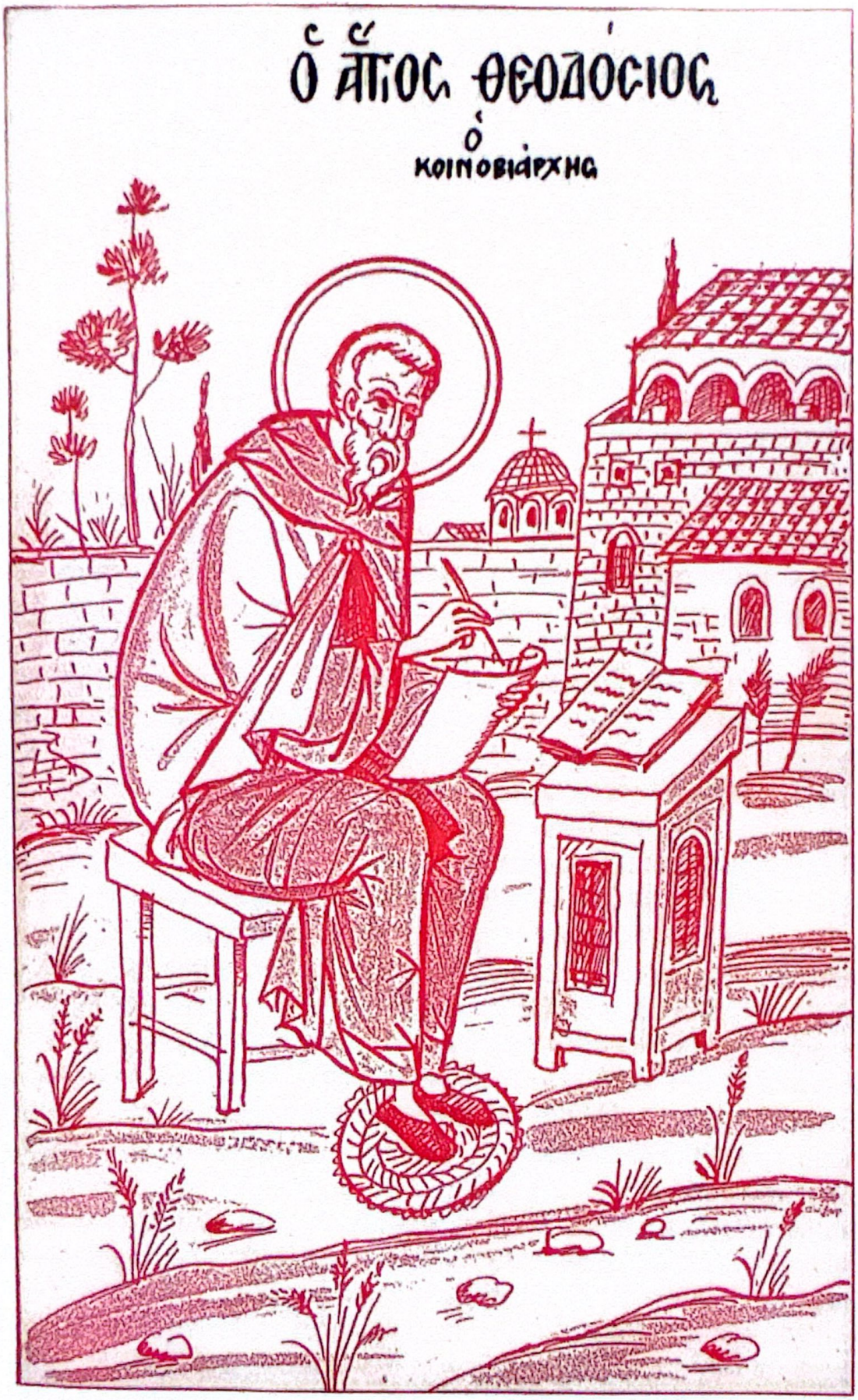
St. Theodosios, as he approached the age of manhood, was possessed by a passion for the philosopher's life and, abandoning his homeland, went to Jerusalem. After he had venerated the Holy Shrines with sanctity of soul, the thought of how to undertake the practical philosophical life and which of the two roads he should follow—that of total isolation and strict seclusion or the cœnobitic life with others, both of which aspire to the same ends—began wholly and singularly to preoccupy him.

But for the present, at least, he chose not to attempt living the Hesychastic life alone, since he did not judge it safe, in that he felt himself totally inexperienced to wrestle with the evil spirits.

"For," he said, "if among the soldiers of the world there is no one so very rash and stupid that, being totally inexperienced at war and never having used weapons of war, he would dare to be hurled immediately from his camp into the midst of the enemy, how would it be possible for me, who have not trained my hands for battle and my fingers for war (Psalm 143:1), who have not yet been girded with strength from on high, to enter into such an engagement, exceedingly dangerous and full of mortal traps, against the commanders and the powers of the prince of this world—against the spirits of evil?

"It behooves me, therefore, first to become a student of the Holy Fathers, who have been well trained before me in these struggles; and only after I have been trained well by these Fathers in war against spiritual enemies, shall I attempt to reap the fruits of Hesychasm." After having thought of all these things with great wisdom (because among other attributes, he also had profound wisdom), St. Theodosios began immediately to seek those who with great efforts had occupied themselves in the study of the good, knowing well that the surest learning or teaching is that which is acquired from experience.

He thus presented and entrusted himself to the Blessed Elder Longi-



St. Theodosios the Cœnobiarch

nos, who was greatly distinguished among the Fathers with whom he lived. He shared Longinos' table and lived with him, being greatly pleased by his manners and his behavior; indeed, to such an extent did he spiritually unite with St. Longinos, that we recall the saying of the Divine David: "My soul hath cleaved unto Thee" (Psalm 62 :9). For, as the ancients rightly say, one is likened unto him with whom he associates and in whom he takes pleasure.

B. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Anthony said that obedience, along with self-restraint, has the power to subdue even wild beasts.

2. Abba Poimen said that someone once asked Abba Paisios: "What should I do, since my soul is insensitive and does not fear God?" Abba Paisios answered him: "Go and cleave unto a man who fears God; by your association with him, you will also learn from him to fear God."

3. Abba Isaiah said to the novices who were disciples of the Holy Fathers, that the first coat of paint does not fade, in the way that purple [which is applied in layers—*Trans.*] does; and just as tender branches easily yield and bend, so also do obedient novices.

4. Abba Moses said to a certain brother: "Come, my brother, into obedience to the truth, where there is humility, where there is strength, where there is joy, where there is patience, where there is forbearance, where there is brotherly concern, where there is contrition, where there is love; for he who has perfect obedience has come to realize all the commandments of God."

5. Once four brothers from a certain skete, wearing animal skins for clothing, went to St. Pambo the Great. Each of them revealed to Pambo the virtue of the other: one had great faith; the second possessed absolutely no property; the third had attained to great love for others; and the fourth had for twenty-two straight years been in obedience to an Elder. After he had heard them, Abba Pambo said to them:

"I assure you that the virtue of this fourth monk is greater than the virtues of you others, since each of you others, regardless of the virtue he possesses, attained to it by his own will. This monk, however, has cut off his will and does the will of another; and for this reason, he is

your superior. Those who obey are confessors of the Faith, since they preserve their obedience until the end."

6. Abba Rouphos said that he who remains in obedience to a spiritual Father has a greater reward than he who stays to himself as an anchorite in the desert.

7. The same Abba related to his disciples something that had been told to him by one of the Fathers. "I was taken up," recounted this Father to the Abba, "into Heaven and saw four categories of men. In the first category, I saw a man who had been ill but who, despite his illness, pleased God. In the second category was a man who had shown hospitality to the brothers, receiving them with willingness and caring for them. In the third category was one who lived in the desert alone and saw no man. And in the fourth category was one who willingly obeyed a spiritual Father and submitted to him in everything for the sake of the Lord.

"Of these four categories of men, the fourth, that is, the man of obedience, wore a gold medallion around his neck and was greater in glory than the others. As soon as I saw his glory," continued the Abba, "I asked my guide, 'How is it that this one, who is the youngest, has more glory than the others?' My guide answered: 'Because the one who practiced hospitality and the anchorite in the desert chose these virtues with their own will. The one in obedience, however, abandoned his will wholly and depended on God and his spiritual Father. Thus, for this reason, his self-denial has been more greatly glorified than that of the others.'"

8. Abba Hyperechios said: "Obedience is the most precious treasure of the monk. The monk who has acquired obedience will be heard by God and will boldly stand next to the Crucified One, for the Crucified Lord obeyed unto death."

9. Two brothers in the flesh once went to live in a monastery. Now, one of these was an ascetic, while the other preferred obedience. With such willingness did the latter obey his spiritual Father that he performed everything which his spiritual Father told him without any hesitation. Many times his spiritual Father would tell him in the morning, "Eat," and he would eat; other times, on the other hand, he would say, "Do not eat until the evening," and he would not eat. Moreover, in gen-

eral, whatever his spiritual Father ordered the brother carried out with joy. For this obedience he was praised by all the monks in the monastery. Seeing this, his brother in the flesh, the ascetic, became jealous and said to himself: "I will test him to see if he has real obedience." He therefore went to the Abbot and said to him: "Send my brother with me, so that we might go to a certain place where we are needed." The Abbot allowed his disciple to leave.

When the two brothers happened on a river which was full of crocodiles, the ascetic said to his brother: "Go into the river and cross it." The obedient monk went in the river. But the crocodiles came and licked his body, without bothering him at all. When the ascetic saw this, he told his brother: "Come out of the river." And he came out unharmed. Walking on after this, they found a dead man on the road, naked. So, the ascetic said: "Would that we had an old piece of clothing, so as to cover him." Then his brother answered, "Better, let us pray. Perhaps God will hear us and resurrect him." And they began to pray. After the prayer, the dead man rose. The ascetic boasted and said that the dead man arose on account of his asceticism.

God revealed all of these occurrences to the Abbot of the monastery. Thus, when they had returned to the monastery, the Abbot said to the ascetic: "Why did you seek to test your brother in the river in such a dangerous manner? Take heed. It was through obedience that the dead man was raised."

10. Abba Poimen said: "Do not take account of your accomplishments; cleave, instead, to him who lives virtuously and in an exemplary way."

C. From Abba Mark

It is not possible for one who lives under the yoke of sin to subdue the desires of the flesh by himself, since he has ceaselessly inside him an inclination towards the passions. Therefore, as long as we are prone to the passions, it is necessary for us to pray and to be obedient. Indeed, only with great difficulty are we able to fight the habits rooted inside us without the help of another. The one who struggles in obedience and prayer against his will is a clever athlete, rendering his spiritual struggle effective by his abstinence from sensual things.

D. From St. Diadochos

Obedience is acknowledged as the prime good of the basic virtues which one must acquire, since it casts out pride and creates in us humility. For this reason it is also, for those who thankfully undertake it, a gateway through which comes love towards God. Adam rejected obedience and fell to the Tartarus of punishment. The Lord loved this obedience and, in His Incarnation by Providence, was obedient to His heavenly Father unto the Cross and Death. He obeyed, even though He was in nothing inferior to the greatness of the heavenly Father, so that He might abolish, through His obedience, the crime of human disobedience and lead once again into the eternal and blessed life all those who shall live in obedience. Whosoever takes on the struggle against the arrogance of the Devil must, above all, then, concern himself with this obedience, since it will show to those who take it on all of the ways of virtue, without any danger of falling to delusion.

E. From St. Cassian

With no other fault does the Devil so effectively pull man down into the abyss of corruption as he does by persuading one to disregard the conduct of his life according to the teachings and counsel of the Fathers, but rather to follow his own will. For he who follows his own judgement and opinion will never proceed with certainty, but will stumble over many obstacles and be deluded, encountering many terrifying dangers, as though walking continually in darkness.

We must heed this lesson, following the example of the arts and sciences of mankind. That is, if we are unable to learn by ourselves things of the arts and sciences—even though we can examine them with our hands—but have need of a good teacher to show us every single thing, how, then, would it not be foolish and idiotic to believe that we are able to succeed in learning the spiritual arts, which are more difficult and demanding than all the arts and sciences, without a teacher? The spiritual arts are not empirical or visible, as are all those arts which concern themselves with the physical world, but are invisible and hidden, having as their aim the soul and as their purpose making it Godlike. Failure at these arts does not bring about temporary harm, but occasions the loss of the soul and eternal death and condemnation.

F. From St. Maximos

God the Word of God the Father [Jesus Christ] is found mystically

in each of His own commandments; and God the Father is, by nature, entirely inseparable from His Word. Therefore, one who receives the Divine commandment, and applies it, receives also the Word of God, Who exists in it. Since, through the commandments, one receives the Word, he receives at the same time the Father, Who by nature exists with God the Word. Moreover, he receives the Holy Spirit, Which coexists by nature with Him. The Holy Gospel says, in other words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me" (St. John 13:20). Therefore, he who receives the commandment, and performs it, has received and contains mystically within himself the Holy Trinity.

G. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Joseph the Thebite said that three things are important before God. First, when a man becomes ill and is beset by trials, but endures them gratefully. The second is when a man performs all his deeds in purity before God, without their involving anything human. The third is when someone submits to a spiritual Father and denies his own will entirely. Indeed, such a man has one crown more.

2. An Elder said: "One should become like a camel,* lifting one's sins and, bound by obedience, following him who knows the way of God."

3. A brother asked an Elder:

"I perform all of my duties in my cell, yet I receive no consolation from God."

The Elder answered him:

"This happens to you because, though you work on yourself, you are still untested and desire your will to be done."

The brother asked a second time:

"What then, Father, do you suggest that I should do?"

The Elder answered:

"Go and attach yourself to a man who fears God and humble yourself before him, discarding totally your will; then you will experience the consolation which is from God."

H. From St. Ephraim

Since we do not wish to endure the smallest of afflictions for the sake of the Lord, we fall, against our wills, to many and bad afflictions. And since we do not want to abandon our own wills for the sake of the Lord, we bring on ourselves damage to our souls and destruction. Moreover, because we do not allow ourselves to be obedient and to suffer scorn for the sake of the Lord, we deprive ourselves of the consolation of the righteous. And since we will not be obedient to the counsel of those who set laws over us for the sake of the Lord, we make ourselves playthings of the evil demons. By not allowing ourselves the strict rearing symbolized by the rod, the oven of fire, which is never extinguished and from which there will never be any consolation, shall consume us.

I. From Abba Mark

Do not become a disciple of one who praises himself, so as not to learn pride instead of humility.

* Because the camel, as a beast of burden, carries a large burden and also endures hardship on the journey, and faithfully follows its guide, and also because it remembers well and loves those who have done good to it and, contrariwise, is hostile to those who have harmed it, for this reason the Elder says here: "Become like a camel"; that is, in order to be saved, remember the burden of your sins and follow faithfully one who knows the way of God—the way of salvation—but flee the Devil, who does you harm.

Hypothesis XX

That one should not trust in himself in anything, but should heed the advice of the Fathers in all things and should clearly confess the secrets of his heart without hiding anything.

A. From Palladios

1. There once lived an Alexandrian named Heron, whose neighbor I was. This man, Heron, was younger than I, well-bred, intelligent, of a clean life, and extremely weak in body, on account of his excellent way of life as a monk—so much so, that many of those who knew him said that he often ate only every three months, satisfying himself with Holy Communion and some wild weeds, if such happened to take root in the place where he lived.

I also came to know Heron from up close, whenever we happened to go together with the Blessed Alvinos to Sketis, which was forty *semeia** distant from us. During the time in which we walked, we usually ate and drank twice, while he put nothing into his mouth; and as he travelled on foot, he recited Psalms by heart: the Great Psalm (the *Amomos*) [Gr., Ἄμωμος, or "Blameless," the appellation applied to Psalm 118—*Trans.*] and fifteen others, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the book of Isaiah, as well as part of the book of the Prophet Jeremiah, the Gospel according to St. Luke, and the Proverbs. Despite this, we could not keep up with him as he walked. Now this man, so full of virtue and asceticism, after so many great labors and so much perspiration, became greatly possessed by pride, and from there was cast down into a fall that was lamentable in every way. Having fallen on account of such vain arrogance and considering himself greater than the Holy Fathers, he railed at everyone, saying: "Anyone who listens to your teachings is deceived, because we should not have any teacher except for Christ, since the Savior Himself said to call no man on earth teacher."

So much did this man become darkened in his mind from sinister pride, and so far did he fall from the heights of virtue—just as did Ouales [often rendered in English as "Valens"—*Trans.*], whom I have described**—that eventually he closed himself in his cell and did not want to come out even to partake of the Holy Mysteries.

Finally, having been swept away by the demon of pride, so that he was burned within by an exceedingly strong fire, he went down to Alexandria, there "to pull a nail with a nail."*** He fell into such indifference that he would frequent the theater, race track, and taverns; finally, he succumbed to the wanton desire for a woman, so that he seriously thought of falling to sexual sin—indeed, he met an actress with whom he continually spoke of this passion.

However, while in this state, by the Providence of God, a carbuncle appeared on his genital organs. And for six months he was taken by such illness, that his private parts rotted away entirely and fell off by themselves. When he became well and had recovered, he returned to the skete, deprived of his private parts. There he remembered the heavenly realm, acquiring again a Godlike outlook. He confessed to the Fathers everything which had happened to him, but was unable to realize his repentance in a virtuous life, since he reposed after only a few days.

2. Now, again, another man, whose name was Ptolemy and whose virtuous life is difficult for one to recount, lived, at first, as an ascetic far from the skete, in a place called "Klimax" [the place of the ladder—*Trans.*], in which no other monk until then had been able to live, since it lay some eighteen *semeia* from a well with water. Ptolemy, however, had acquired some clay pots, and with a sponge he would collect the dew which came down in that isolated place during the night, in December and January, and would place it in the pots.****

Under these difficult conditions, he remained in that place for fifteen years, during which time he encountered no one else. He became estranged, therefore, from every benefit of instruction and from any association with the Holy Fathers, and was deprived of the continuous partaking of the Holy Mysteries of Christ. The result of this estrangement was that he fell into such a great mania, and was so diverted from the straight path, as to fall into the impious theory of automatism.***** In other words, the devil tricked him into believing and proclaiming that all the different things of the world are not creations of God, but simply exist, having been created adventitiously.

Thus, once the Enemy of the life of all had put this foolish delusion into Ptolemy's mind, it afterwards entirely entered into his soul. He then said to him: "Since everything is by chance and nothing exists by intention, why do you torture yourself needlessly? In what will you be benefited, since there is no reward after death? What reward worthy of your so many difficult labors can there be for you? And who is it who

will repay you? Moreover, what is this judgement that the Scriptures threaten, since everything exists without any purpose?"

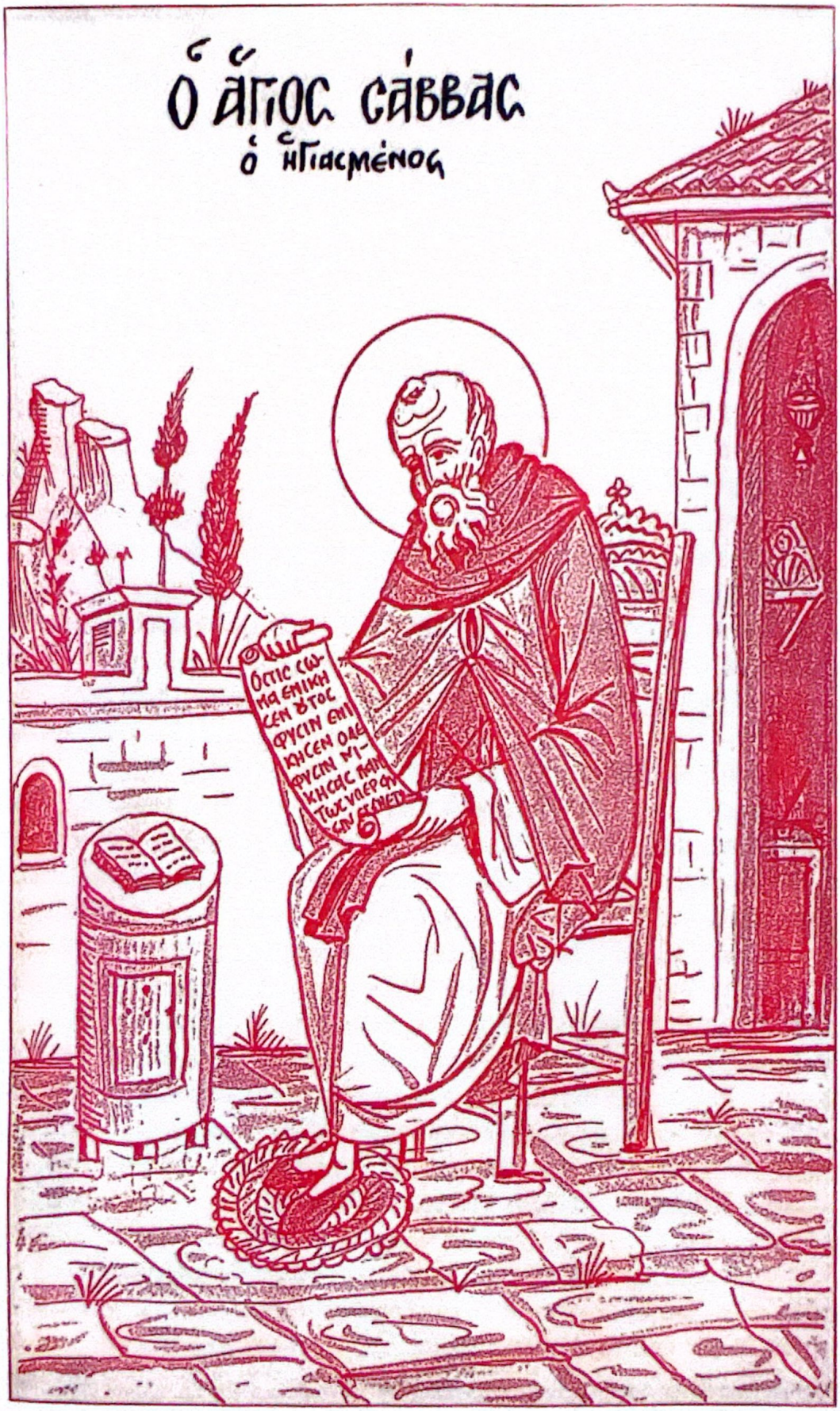
When the wretched Ptolemy became utterly possessed by these satanic thoughts, he abandoned asceticism and, as they say, "lost it" and went mad. To this day, he wanders around Egypt aimlessly, given over to gluttony and drinking wine, without talking to anyone. He walks up and down the marketplace, silently, a wretched and lamentable sight in the eyes of Christians, but also the object of insulting curses and ridicule from those who do not know our life. Such an incurable calamity befell the pitiable Ptolemy because of his irrational pride, thinking himself to have understanding greater than all of the Holy Fathers, to the end that he never associated with them, that he might benefit from their teachings and govern his life with their teachings. He became intransigent, and for this reason tumbled down into the darkest depths of spiritual death. For all those who do not govern their lives as they should will fall, just as leaves fall from a tree.

B. From the Life of St. Savvas

Once, when St. Savvas left for the desert, during Lent, as was his custom, and was staying there, one of his disciples, Iakovos by name, who was from Jerusalem and well known for his impertinence, displayed even worse than normal conduct and, after pulling astray other monks like him into foolishness, left the monastery and went into a valley called Heptastomos. There he attempted to found his own monastery, building cells and constructing a Church, and, in general, establishing all that is appointed for a monastery.

However, since the brothers became greatly irritated against Iakovos and would not allow the construction to proceed further, Iakovos, adding to his criminal acts, lied to the monks, telling them that all of this was supposedly occurring in accordance with the will of their Father and Abbot, St. Savvas. As soon as the monks heard this information, they stopped obstructing him in the construction. They were not freed, however, from the internal sorrow that they felt, as they saw with their own eyes Iakovos taking away much of their former monastery. Nevertheless, since they believed that Iakovos was telling them the truth, they kept silent, awaiting the return of their spiritual Father, St. Savvas.

After the time of Lent had ended, the Divine Savvas returned to the monastery; having seen what had happened with his own eyes, he immediately called Iakovos, imploring him in a fatherly way to stop the



St. Savvas the Sanctified

work, since the course which he had undertaken was neither pleasing to God nor in agreement with the opinion of the brothers—but also because it was very dangerous for Iakovos personally to take on the responsibility of other souls, as a spiritual Father, when he had not yet trained himself very well. The Divine Father Savvas advised Iakovos in this manner, with meekness and in a fatherly way. However, since he saw that Iakovos objected and did not want to obey, he set aside his usual leniency and said to him more sternly:

"My son, I believe that what I have advised you is in your interest; however, since you will not obey, take care that you are not taught what is in your self-interest only after having come to great injury."

As soon as he had said this, St. Savvas left for the monastery. Iakovos began at that same moment to tremble in his body, and came down with a high fever. Shortly, he fell sick into his bed and for eight whole months was tormented, suffering from this curious illness. Now, when he had lost even his last hope that he would be healed, and was approaching death, he remembered the disobedience he had shown to St. Savvas. At once, then, he implored with persistence those around him to lift the bed on which he lay, because of his illness, and to take him and place him at the feet of the great Saint, that he might "forgive me," as he said, "for my disobedience, so that I will not die unforgiven."

Indeed, his wish was granted, and in a short while Iakovos, on his sickbed, was taken to St. Savvas. The Saint, after looking on him with meekness—he who was indeed meek and compassionate—told him with sweetness:

"Have you learned now, my brother, what the fruit of impertinence is? Have you adequately learned it? Do you understand what the results of a lack of discipline and disobedience are?"

Iakovos, able to open his lips only with effort (since these also had become closed from the illness), answered:

"Forgive me, honorable Father, because I am preparing for my last journey."

Again with love, St. Savvas answered him:

"May God forgive you, my brother."

At the very time that he spoke these words, he placed his hand on the ill man; his hand became a source of strength for the sick Iakovos. And—oh, the wonder!—whereas he had been at death's door, he now sat up. Thereupon, he received Communion, and bodily sustenance followed on that Divine food. In this way, Iakovos was slowly nourished and strengthened. To the surprise of all, he became completely well and

rose from his bed more easily and surely than those who are well.

Since Iakovos was totally healed, St. Savvas imposed a canon on him for his insubordination: that he should never again return to the new construction site, the site of his disobedience. However, Patriarch Elias, as soon as he was informed of the entire matter, did not consider it good that these structures of disobedience should yet remain upright, and thus sent men immediately to knock them totally down.

After this, the Divine Savvas, wishing to show Iakovos to be a child of obedience, entrusted to him the service of caring for visitors. Once, it so happened that Iakovos cooked some beans; and since he was totally inexperienced and untrained in cooking and in reckoning the required amount of food, he prepared so many that the leftovers from these cooked beans were enough for three days. But on the second day, Iakovos threw the remaining beans into a ravine which was near the monastery, as though they were worthless refuse. This action, however, did not escape the attention of the Blessed Savvas; for, as the saying goes, "The wise man's eyes are in his head" (Ecclesiastes 2:14). Immediately, therefore, without anyone realizing it, he went and gathered the scattered beans, spread them out in the sun so that they would dry out, and stored them.

After a little time had gone by, he called Iakovos, so that the two of them could eat together. For food at this common table, he served the beans which Iakovos had shortly before thrown into the ravine and which St. Savvas had prepared with skill, so that the meal served to them was most delicious and pleasing.

As they were eating, the Divine Savvas, in order to test Iakovos, said to him:

"Forgive me, my brother, but perhaps I have not pleased you with my food, as I would have wanted, since I do not have a great deal of experience with foods and seasonings."

Then Iakovos answered with enthusiasm:

"On the contrary, Father. I so enjoyed these beans that I can assure you that it has been a long time since I tasted such sweet and delicious food."

St. Savvas, speaking a second time, said to him:

"Did you know, my child, that this food was made from those beans which you yourself, a short while ago, threw away into the ravine as worthless?

"It is now time for you to think about this: If a person cannot even manage to take care of a pot of beans, so that the amount cooked should

correspond to daily needs and his work not be aimless, can he be considered capable of taking on successfully the guidance of brothers? As proof, it is worthwhile to remember the Apostolic saying: 'For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he care for the Church of God?' (I St. Timothy 3:5)." This and many other similar things did the Blessed Savvas discuss with Iakovos, succeeding, at the same time, in correcting in him the spirit of wastefulness, inspiring in him economy, and also reproaching him for his previous arrogance, insuring that in the future he would not become captured by such a passion. After this, he let Iakovos leave with his prayers and his blessing.

Some time later, while Iakovos was once resting in his cell, he was bothered by indecent carnal thoughts, and the tempest which arose in him from these obscene desires became great and unbearable. Iakovos resisted valiantly these indecent thoughts for a great while. In time, however, terrorized by this sea of temptations and thinking that, in the end, the tempest would not cease (this thought of course came in its entirety from the Evil One and was one of his machinations and cunning methods), and with his mind darkened, neglecting the Holy Canons, he took a knife and cut off his genital organs, curing, in this most horrible way, evil by evil. Being unable to bear the pain or stop the bleeding, he began to cry out and scream for help to those near him.

The monks ran to him immediately and, seeing this fearful self-mutilation, began at once to offer first aid to Iakovos, essaying to relieve his pains. The matter, however, became known to St. Savvas, as well; thus, as soon as Iakovos recovered a bit from the pain, St. Savvas expelled him straightway from the monastery as an enemy to himself and as an evil self-mutilator. After this, Iakovos experienced a painful repentance: The pricks of conscience bitterly tortured his soul, earnest tears poured forth, and he groaned mournfully. It was a totally pitiful and lamentable thing for anyone to look upon him, and in his misery he invited the sympathy of all who saw him.

Finding himself, therefore, in this sad state, Iakovos went to the Blessed Theodosios and confessed to him the awful carnal battles which had tortured him, telling him about his self-mutilation and weeping over his expulsion from the monastery. Hearing this, Theodosios took pity on him and went with him to the Blessed Savvas, imploring him fervently, on the one hand, to forgive Iakovos and, on the other hand, to take him back in the monastery, after having imposed on him the appropriate punishment.

Indeed, St. Savvas gave in to the pleading of his friend, but was also

moved, in so doing, by his own innate goodness and compassion; thus, he once again received Iakovos into the monastery. He imposed on him, however, various penances, among which was an order not to speak to, or see, anyone in the monastery, except when it was absolutely necessary in the course of fulfilling his duties. So, Iakovos again acquired his cell, in which he kept silence and repented with great effort for all he had done, imploring God earnestly to forgive him, until at last he received forgiveness from Heaven in the following manner, which we shall forthwith disclose.

There once appeared to the Divine Savvas a man, brilliantly shining with effulgent rays of sweet light, who stood near him and showed him a dead man, who had been placed at the feet of Iakovos, who was praying to God for the dead man. In the meantime, a voice was heard from Heaven, saying:

"Iakovos, your prayer has been heard; therefore, touch the dead man and he will immediately arise."

After this exhortation, Iakovos indeed touched the dead man, and he immediately got up.

This illumined being turned to Savvas and told him that what was portrayed in the vision had to be carried out at once; that is, that Savvas should go out immediately from his cell and order that, in the future, Iakovos was to be a part of the gatherings of the brotherhood.

And so, Iakovos went to the Church, spoke with the brothers, and kissed them. Afterwards, he went to the Blessed Theodosios, with whom he exchanged the kiss of Christ, and on the seventh day after the vision departed with joy from the present life.

C. From the *Gerontikon*

1. We once visited one of the Fathers and posed the following question:

"Father, if one is bothered by a certain temptation and, seeing that he is slowly being conquered by it, despite reading many times what the Fathers say about overcoming temptation and trying to apply it, does not totally succeed, what is preferable? That he should reveal his temptation to one of the Fathers, or that he should concern himself with applying what he has studied and be satisfied in his conscience?"

The Elder answered:

"One who is embattled by a temptation has the obligation to reveal this thought of his to someone who has the strength to benefit him. For

support, he should not rely on himself only. For no one is able to help himself, when he is actually tormented by passions. To me," continued the Elder, "the following occurred when I was younger. I suffered from a spiritual passion and I succumbed to it. I was informed that Abba Zeno healed many who found themselves in situations like mine. Therefore, I also decided to go and to reveal to Abba Zeno my passion; however, Satan hindered me, whispering in my soul high-sounding thoughts: 'Since you know what you must do, act according to what you have studied in books. Why should you go and trouble the Elder?' As many times, then, as I would decide to go to visit the Elder and to reveal to him my temptation, I would feel relief from the onslaught of that passion. This certainly was the cunning of the Devil, so that I would not go, since when I would decide not to go, I would again be possessed by the passion. Now, for a long time the Enemy pulled me astray, into this trap, not tolerating that I should confess my temptation to the Elder. Many times I would go to the Elder with the decision to tell him my temptation; however, the Enemy would not let me, because of the embarrassment which he caused in my heart. 'Since you know,' he would say in my thoughts, 'how you must heal yourself, what is the need to reveal to someone your passion? Besides, you are not negligent. You know what the Fathers have said about similar situations.'

"The Enemy brought all these things into my mind, so that I would not reveal my passion to the doctor and be healed. The Elder, however, realized that I was being tormented by temptations. He did not reproach me, but waited for me to reveal them myself. He also instructed me about the correct manner of living, and let me depart with his blessing. Once, however, after one such visit, while grieving over my miserable condition, I said to myself: 'How much longer, my miserable soul, will you go without being healed? Many come to the Elder who live far away and are healed. Are you not ashamed to have the physician so near, and yet not be healed?' Therefore, since my heart was warmed by these thoughts, I arose at once and said to myself: 'I will go to the Elder and, if I find there no visitors, I will know that it is the Will of God that I confess to him my thought.' And indeed, going to the cell of the Elder, I found no one.

"The Elder, as was his custom, instructed me again about the salvation of the soul and how it is necessary for a person to be cleansed of shameful thoughts. (I, from shame, again disclosed nothing to him, and was getting ready to leave.) Standing up, he blessed me and showed me out, walking ahead of me to the front door of his cell. Tormented,

however, by the thought of whether or not I should confess my temptations to the Elder, I walked behind him with hesitating steps. Then the Elder turned to me and, seeing me thus, tortured by thoughts, tapped me in a friendly way on the chest and said to me:

"'My son, what is wrong? I am also a man.'

"I felt the words of the Elder open my heart and, falling on my knees, I implored him with tears:

"'Father, take pity on me.'

"'What is the matter, my child?' asked the Elder.

"'Do you not know what is wrong?'

"The Elder, as if he knew the secret in my heart, said to me:

"'It is necessary that you say it.'

"At that moment, then, I, with great shame, confessed to him my passion.

"After listening to me, the Elder said:

"'Why were you ashamed to entrust this to me for so long? Perhaps I am not also a man? Did you just want me to reveal to you what I knew? Why would you come here for three years already, tormented by these temptations, but without confessing them?'

"After this, deeply moved by him, I fell again on my knees, saying:

"'You are right, Father. I beg you now to take pity on me, for the love of the Lord.'

"And again the Elder added graciously:

"'Go. Do not neglect your prayer and criticize no one.'

"Going back to my cell and busying myself constantly with my prayer, by the Grace, to be sure, of Christ and through the prayers of the Elder, I was never again bothered by that passion.

"A year later, the following thought assailed my mind: 'Perhaps God had compassion on you because of His mercy alone, and not because of the Elder.' As soon as this thought came to me, I went immediately to the Elder's cell, in order to test him. After finding him, I prostrated before him and said:

"'Father, for the love of God, I implore you to pray for me on account of that temptation which once I confessed to you.'

"The Elder left me on my knees. Then, falling silent for a moment, afterwards said to me:

"'Get up. You should have faith.'

"As soon as I heard this answer, I experienced such shame at that moment that I wanted the earth to swallow me. And after I rose, I did not have the strength to face the Elder, but returned to my cell, full of

wonder and astonishment."

2. An ascetic Elder said: "He who becomes a fool for the sake of the Lord will make himself wise!"

3. A brother asked a certain Elder:
"Why do I suffer from temptations, despite the fact that I associate with Elders?"
The Elder answered:
"The Enemy rejoices in nothing else as much as he does in those who do not reveal their temptations."

4. Abba Anthony said: "I know monks who fell after many ascetic labors and who lost their minds because they placed their hopes in their deeds only, and did not keep in mind the commandment of Him Who said: 'Ask thy father, and he shall shew thee; thy elders and they will tell thee' (Deuteronomy 32:7)."

5. The same St. Anthony also said: "It behooves a monk to show spirit before the Elders: he should ask them if he is perhaps doing something wrong; if possible, even how many steps he should take; or how many drops of water he should drink in his cell."
A brother who was in obedience to a certain Father discovered a place in the desert, which was isolated and quiet. He made a request to his spiritual Father, saying: "Allow me to live in that place, and I will trust in God and in your prayers that I will have the strength to accomplish many deeds." The Abba let him go, but said to him: "I know, indeed, that you have the strength to submit yourself to many labors, but in not having an Elder, you trust that your work will be pleasing to God. And on account of this self-confidence, that you are rightly performing the duties of a monk, you will lose both the benefits of your labors and your mind."

6. Abba Moses said: "A monk who is attached to a spiritual Father, but does not have obedience or humility, but of his own will fasts or does something else which he believes is good, will never acquire virtue; nor will he learn what it is to be a monk."

7. Abba Poimen tells us that Abba Theonas used to say that, even if a monk manages to attain to some virtue by his own will, God will not

provide him with His Grace, that this virtue might remain with him; for a monk must learn that he cannot have absolute trust in his own deeds. If, however, he goes to his fellow monks, in order to consult them, then the virtue will remain with him.

8. An Elder said: "If indecent thoughts bother you, do not hide them, but tell them immediately to your spiritual Father and thus check them. For to the extent that a man hides his thoughts, so much more do they multiply and strengthen. In other words, just as a snake, when it comes out of its hole, immediately goes on its way, so an evil thought, as soon as it is revealed, immediately vanishes. And just as a worm consumes wood, in the same way an evil thought destroys the heart. He who reveals his thoughts by confession is quickly restored to health. He who hides them suffers from pride."

9. Abba Makarios lived by himself in the deepest desert. Lower down, there was another desert, in which many brothers lived in asceticism. Now, one day, as he was standing outside his cell, Makarios saw Satan, in the form of a man, passing on the road. He wore as clothing a linen garment riddled with holes. In each hole a small flask hung. The Elder recognized him and said to him:

"Hey you, big shot, where are you going?"

"I'm going to pester the monks with evil thoughts," answered Satan.

"Why do you need those little bottles?" the Elder again asked.

"I'm taking them so that the monks can taste the contents."

"Why so many?" the Elder asked in amazement.

"Oh, yes. If someone does not like one, I give him another. If not that one, then I offer him a third one. In any case, from all of these, at least one will be pleasing to him."

After Satan said this, he left.

The Elder stayed in the same place, watching the road for Satan's return.

As soon as the Elder saw him, he greeted him in the manner of monks.

"I pray that you be saved."

"How is it possible for me to be saved?" Satan answered angrily.

"Why not?" the Elder asked.

"Because everyone is angry against me and no one puts up with me."

"So you have no friends at all down there?"

"Actually, I have only one brother—up here; and at least he listens to me. And when he sees me, he whirls like the wind from joy," answered Satan.

"And what is the name of this monk?"

"Theopemptos," answered Satan, as he left.

Immediately Abba Makarios got up and went to the monks. As soon as they realized he was coming, they took palm branches in their hands and came out to meet him. Each of them cleaned his cell in order to receive the Elder, with the hidden hope that he would stay with him.

The Elder asked which one of them was Theopemptos. And after finding him, he entered his cell. Theopemptos received him with joy.

After they had prayed and sat down, they began to discuss spiritual matters.

"How are you doing?" the Elder asked the brother.

"With your prayers, well," answered the monk.

"Perhaps, my child, you are struggling with some temptation?"

"So far, I am doing well," answered the monk, since he was ashamed to tell the truth.

The Elder, with fatherly affection and graciousness, said again to the monk:

"My child, as you see, I have some years in asceticism, and everyone respects me. And yet, the thought of fornication bothers even me, an old man."

"Believe me, Abba, I also am bothered by the same temptation," said the monk.

Abba Makarios pretended that he struggled with other temptations as well, until he got Theopemptos to confess all of his thoughts.

After the brother had confessed all of his thoughts in this manner, Abba Makarios asked him.

"How do you fast, my brother?"

"I fast until the ninth hour."

The Elder then advised him:

"You should fast until late at night. You should perform your ascetic duties with zeal, and you should learn passages from the Gospels and the book of Psalms by heart. If evil thoughts should sometimes come into your mind, never react to them and never pay attention to earthly things; rather, direct your mind always upwards. Confess this temptation that we discussed to your spiritual Father and the Lord will forthwith help you." After the Elder had made the sign of the Cross over the monk, he returned to his cell.

Looking out at the road from his cell, the Elder once again saw the Devil, dressed in the same way as the first time. Abba Makarios asked him:

"Where are you going now?"

"I'm going to put evil thoughts into the minds of the monks," answered Satan, leaving.

The Elder again watched the road and waited for him. When he saw him returning, he asked:

"How are the brothers?"

"Awful," answered Satan with displeasure.

"Why?"

"They are all enraged against me. And the worst thing is that even the one whom I had as a friend, and who obeyed me, has changed—I do not know how!—and no longer obeys me, having become the angriest of all against me. For this reason I have sworn an oath, for the present at least, not to set foot in that place again for a long time." After saying these things, Satan left. The Saint went into his cell and thanked God for the brother's salvation.

D. From St. Ephraim

My brother, take care for yourself, that no evil thought happens to be engendered in your heart and that you do not entertain this thought or hide it from your spiritual Father. For something similar happened to one of the ancients: He took from the offerings and hid them in his tent. The same thing happened to Gehazi, the servant of the Prophet Elissaios. Both of these acted secretly, though in so doing escaped neither the eye of God nor the attention of men. Having done evil in secret, they earned their just fruits openly. The first of these two was stoned, together with his whole family, by all of the people (Joshua 6:18; 7:1-26), while the second received leprosy as his lot, along with his descendants forever (IV Kings 5:20-27). He is not a liar who said: "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

E. From Abba Isaac

My brother, if you err in something, do not tell a lie because you are ashamed, but make a prostration and say: "Forgive me," and your error will be immediately forgiven. Do not have different words in your

mouth than you have in your heart, for God is not mocked, but sees all: both things hidden and things in the open. Therefore, do not hide any of your temptations, or any concern, or any desire, or even a simple thought; but freely confess them to your Abba. Whatever you hear from him, take care to carry it out, performing it with sincerity. For then, the battle will be easier for you. The evil spirits find joy nowhere else but in the man who keeps his thoughts silent, whether they be good or bad.

Let your heart obey your Fathers, and the Grace of the Lord will dwell in your heart. Do not think yourself wise, so that you will not fall into the hands of your enemy. The fact that you keep silent and do not reveal your thoughts shows only that you seek the honor of the world and its obscene glory. But he who has the courage to tell his thoughts openly before the Fathers rejects them from his mind. You should always seek and receive counsel from your Fathers, and thus you will always have peace, throughout your entire life.

F. From Abba Cassian

1. To reveal to the Fathers not only all that we do, but also all that we think, is a mark of true humility. Because this work renders the monk able to travel the straight path without harm and without danger that he will stumble. It is impossible for one who regulates his life according to the judgement of those with greater experience to fall into the deception of the demons. Besides, by itself the disclosure or revelation of indecent thoughts to the Fathers enfeebles these thoughts and causes them to wither. Exactly as a snake comes out of a dark hole and rushes to be saved by flight and by making himself no longer visible, so evil thoughts also flee from men, when they are revealed by sincere admission and a clear confession.

2. Something similar was told to me by Abba Serapion about himself. "When I was younger," he told me, "and I was with my Abba, as we were eating, I would get up from the table and, because of the instigation of the demons, steal a biscuit and eat it secretly, hiding it from the Abba. I kept up this bad habit for a long time and was obsessed by it, not having the strength to restrain myself. I was reproached only by my conscience, and was ashamed to tell it to the Elder.

"It so happened, by the Providence of God, Who loves mankind, that certain brothers came to visit the Elder, in order to receive spiritual benefit. These men asked the Elder about their thoughts. In response,

the Elder said to them that nothing so harms monks or so gives pleasure to the demons as for them to hide their thoughts from their spiritual Fathers. Continuing, my Elder spoke to the visitors about abstinence as well. As I listened to the things my Elder was saying, I began to come to my senses and suspect that God had disclosed my transgressions to the Elder. I was deeply moved by this and began to weep. So, after removing from my breast pocket the biscuit which I had stolen, on account of my bad habit, I fell to the ground and asked for forgiveness for the faults I had committed and for the Elder's blessing, that God might keep me safe in the future. The Elder said to me: 'Ah child, yet without my saying anything to you, your confession has set you free, inasmuch as you have confessed with sincerity your faults and have slain the demon which until now had wounded you with silence. From this time forth, then, he will not have a place in your soul, since he has come out of your heart and has been revealed.'

"The Elder had not yet quite finished what he was saying when—behold!—the power of the demon appeared to be coming out of my breast, like a flame of fire, filling the whole place with a stench so foul that those present thought that sulphur was burning somewhere. Then the Elder said: 'Behold! Proof of my words and of your freedom. God has clearly shown us the truth with the sign which just occurred.' From that time forth, the passion of gluttony left me, as well as that devilish desire to steal food; after that, I never even thought about it."

3. Now, from all that has been said, we learn that no other way of salvation exists, save that we confess thoughts to the Fathers and not disdain the tradition of our forefathers. That our forefathers, not prompted by their own opinions, but enlightened by God and rooted in the Divinely inspired Scriptures, have directed us, their descendants, to consult those who have progressed in asceticism we also learn from many texts of Holy Scripture, especially from the story of the Prophet Samuel.

The Prophet Samuel, as we know, was dedicated to God by his mother when he was still an infant. When he was made worthy to hear the voice of God, he did not trust his thoughts, but, being called by God once and then two more times, turned to the Elder Eli and, through his teaching, learned the way in which he was to answer God (I Kings 3:2-10). Indeed, even one whom God directly called as worthy of Him, God Himself wished to be taught by his Elder, in order to be led by his Elder in humility.

4. And even St. Paul, despite the fact that Christ Himself had called him and spoken with him, and could have immediately opened his eyes and shown him the way of perfection, God sent to Ananias, leaving him to learn from Ananias the way of truth, saying to him: "Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts 9: 6). In this way, the Lord teaches us that we should follow the instructions of those who have progressed in the spiritual life. Having been taught this, the Apostle himself realized it in his deeds, thus describing himself, saying: "I went up again to Jerusalem...(to see Peter and James)...and communicated unto them that Gospel which I preach..., lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain" (Galatians 2: 1-2). Oh, the chosen vessel! He who ascended unto the third Heaven and heard from God Himself words which one cannot express in normal language, he who was always accompanied by the Grace of the Spirit and who confirmed the word of His teaching by the miracles which he performed—he admits that he had need of the counsel of those Apostles who had preceded him in the Apostolic office.

Who, then, is so presumptuous and proud that he does not tremble when he hears such things, or does not fear to follow his own opinion as he would fear the Gehenna of fire and unending punishment? This is so because the Lord reveals to no one the way of perfection, except only if he be guided to it by the counsel and assistance of a spiritual Father; for this reason, God commands us through His Prophet, saying: "Ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee" (Deuteronomy 32:7).

G. From Abba Barsanouphios

A brother questioned an Elder, saying:

"I was sent into the Holy City in the service of the monastic community and took this occasion to go to the Jordan to pray, without, however, asking permission for this from the Abba. Did I do well or not?"

The Elder answered him:

"Without permission you should never go anywhere, because that which we do according to the inspiration of our own thoughts, even if it may seem good, is not pleasing to God. To observe the command of your Abba, who sent you on this task—this is both prayer and service to God, Who said: 'I did not come to do My will, but the will of the Father, Who sent Me.'"

The brother again asked the Elder:

"If I go off on a task and go a long way from my country, but have neglected to ask my Abba where I should stay, what should I do?"

The Elder answered:

"You must be careful in anything that you encounter and you must perform everything for the benefit of your soul. But you must act with the understanding that you are transgressing a commandment, and not that you are doing well, for you have dared to do something without specific permission. When you act in this way, let your Abba be informed, that he may forgive you."

And again the brother asked:

"What is false knowledge?"

The Elder answered:

"False knowledge is for someone to trust in his own reason and to imagine that things are the way he thinks they are. If one wishes to be released from this false knowledge, let him not have trust in his thoughts or consider them good. Let him say to himself: 'I am being mocked by the demons, so that I will believe in my mind that somehow my knowledge is correct and true and thus avoid asking the Elders. In this way, the demons are leading me astray to yet other errors. Now, my Elder speaks the truth, since he is enlightened by God to speak and is not in any way a plaything of the demons. My thought, however, is silliness and mockery.'"

H. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother struggled for some time with the demon of fornication and, though he labored a great deal, was unable to find release from it. One day, while he was standing amidst the gathered monks, he felt himself once again bothered by this passion. So, he decided to reveal his trial with the demon to the brothers and to ask them to pray for him, so that God might perhaps be compassionate and relieve him somewhat from the passion. Therefore, without any thought of embarrassment, which he completely ignored, he bared himself, by his confession, before all the brothers and denounced the energy of Satan, saying: "Pray for me, Fathers and brothers, because for fourteen years I have fought in this manner." And immediately—oh, the wonder!—the warfare of immorality left from him, owing to the humility which he had shown.

2. Another brother fought in the same manner against fornication and struggled in the most intense asceticism, thereby protecting him-

self, so that he might not fall to this desire. However, since the battle would not cease, he went to the Church and made known to all the gathering the fight which consumed him. So, the Presbyters gave a command, and everyone toiled for one week for his sake, praying to God. And, indeed, the brother was released from his struggle.

3. Yet another brother was attacked by the temptation of fornication. It was the middle of the night, but he nonetheless immediately got up and went to the Elder and confessed his thought to him. The Elder comforted him with spiritual words, and the brother, having been benefited, returned to his cell. But again the battle was raised up against him. The monk, without even a second thought, fled to the Elder again and, having been comforted, returned a second time to his cell. From then on, as many times as he was troubled, he went straightway to the Elder, without hesitating at all. And the Elder received him willingly, supported him with counsel and comforting words, and, as he led him back to his cell, instructed him not to lose courage but always, when he sensed the approach of carnal warfare, to come to him and confront the assault of this demon. "For nothing so effectively forces the demon of fornication to take flight," the Elder would say, "as do the reproach of sin and a clear confession made with humility and faith."

Thereafter, since this situation had gone on for a long time, God, seeing the perseverance of the besieged brother and the patience of the Elder, allowed this struggle to leave the brother.

* As we measure distances today in kilometers, so at the time "*semeia*" were used to indicate distances on the roads used by travellers.

** This "Ouales" is earlier cited in *The Lausaic History* for his fall through pride.

*** An expression analogous to the ancient adage: "unpegging a peg with a peg."

**** He collected the dew since, in those regions, almost no rain at all falls. Only a small amount of dew collects during the nights of the months indicated.

***** Automatism posits the mechanical functioning of things, whether good or bad, without the actor having any conscious knowledge of them, all movement taking place randomly and without intention.

Hypothesis XXI

That we must confess our thoughts to those among the Fathers who are discerning and not entrust them to just anyone; how we are to confess and what we should ask our confessors; what faith we should place in the answers of the Fathers; and how, through this faith, we should work together with our confessors for the achievement of good.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Two brothers, who lived separately, decided to visit each other. One of them said to the other:

"I want to go to Abba Zeno to confide to him a certain thought of mine."

"And I want to do the same," answered the other.

So, each one went to Abba Zeno to confess his particular thought.

The first, having confessed, fell at the feet of the Elder and with effusive tears implored the Elder to pray to God for him.

The Elder said to him:

"Go, and do not transgress any longer. Criticize no one and do not be negligent in your prayer." This brother went away healed.

The other brother, after he had related his thought to the Elder, mentioned casually, and with no desire for correction, "Father, pray for me." He did not, moreover, make this request with any commitment or agony of soul.

After a little time had passed, the brothers again visited each other. One of them said:

"When we visited Abba Zeno, did you reveal to him the thought which you said you wished to tell him?"

"Yes," answered the other.

"Then you were benefited by that confession?" the first brother once again asked.

"Certainly. By the prayers of the Elder, God healed me."

"I," the first responded, "even though I confessed, did not gain any healing."

"Why not? What did you ask of the Elder?"

"I told him, 'Pray for me,' because I am tortured by this thought."

"During the confession of my thought," the other brother said, "I wet his feet with my tears and with soulful pain begged him to pray for me. Indeed, by his prayers, God has healed me."

This was told to us by the Elder, who also told us that one who consults one of the Fathers in order to be released from his temptations must ask this with all his heart and with pain. He who confesses in a formal way only, and casually, or tests the spiritual Father, not only is not benefited, but is even condemned.

2. An Elder tells us of a monk who once fell to a serious sin. His conscience, however, reproached him, and he repented. So, he went to confess to an Elder. Because of his shame, however, he did not mention the act, but only his temptation to do it. That is, he told the Elder: "Father, I was troubled by this thought. Is there salvation for me?" However, the spiritual Father who heard this confession, since he was not experienced and lacked spiritual discretion, said to the sinful monk: "You have lost your soul." As soon as the brother heard this, he said to himself: "As long as I have lost my soul, I may as well go back to the world."

As he was leaving, however, he thought to go to Abba Silouan, who was known for the gift of discretion, and confess his thought to him. But on going to Abba Silouan's cell, he did not confess his sinful act to him either, but confessed only his sinful thought, as he had done with the previous Elder. Abba Silouan, after he had heard the monk, opened his mouth and began to tell him that, according to the Holy Scriptures, there is no condemnation for those who sin only with their thoughts. When the sinful brother heard this, he took strength in his soul and, encouraged by the hope of salvation, revealed to the Elder his sinful act also.

After the Elder had also learned of the brother's deed, like a skilled and experienced doctor he molded the monk's soul with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, showing him that there is repentance for those who willingly return to God.

After this incident, my Abba visited Abba Silouan, from whom he heard the story of the repentant brother. Now, this monk, who had lost hope for himself and was about to return to the world, came to be like a bright star among the brothers. "I am telling you these things," observed the Elder, "so that we might learn that there is great danger in entrusting one's thoughts to persons without experience and spiritual discretion."

B. From St. Ephraim

My brother, take care if someone should confess his thoughts to you, lest you be troubled by these thoughts during the time in which he is relating them; and, indeed, if your mind's eye should weaken a bit, you will then be like a captain who encounters a great tempest. Thus, as soon as you hear the essentials of what someone is confessing, you should infer from these the rest, and then proceed to comfort the troubled person, drawing on all that we have received from holy men or on what we know by experience. It is not the will of the Lord that one person should be destroyed by the sin of another, for the Lord wishes that all should be saved.

But you also, my beloved, must not reveal your thoughts to just anyone, but only to those whom you know to be spiritual, taking no note of their appearance or whether the hair of their head and beard is white. For there are many who "have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof" (II St. Timothy 3:5).

For this reason our Savior counselled us: "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits" (St. Matthew 7:15-16).

We must not, then, pay attention to external appearances, for the Enemy has many traps. We must examine only the thoughts of each person—the way each one thinks. From all those in whom you find the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) hide not your thoughts, so that the Enemy will not chance to find a crack and, having made his way through it, pull you slowly astray into corruption.

Again, take care, my brother, lest having heard the faults of your brother, you reproach him in your heart for having happened to commit such a great sin. Rather, you should marvel at the brother's repentance and at his open confession. Indeed, for someone to reveal his faults voluntarily to spiritual men indicates a restoration of life, the fear of God, faith, and humility.

For this reason alone, you should marvel at your brother and comfort him with humility, keeping in mind the Apostolic injunction: "Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). And remember, as well, that which God said through the mouth of the Prophet Ezekiel: "Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him, in the day that he erreth: and the iniquity of the iniquitous shall not harm him, in the day that he turneth from his iniquity; neither shall the righteous be

able to be saved in the day that he sinneth" (Ezekiel 33:12).

C. From Abba Isaiah

If you ask an Elder to counsel you concerning your thoughts, you should openly speak your mind before him and also freely confess your thoughts, as long as you know for certain that he can be trusted to keep your words in confidence. If certain brothers happen to talk to you about thoughts against which you also battle, do not agree to hear them, so that these thoughts will not provoke warfare within you.

If a brother considers you trustworthy and confides his faults to you, take care not to tell them to anyone, since this will be death to you. If you question the Elders about your thoughts, do not wait until after you have committed the misdeed to ask them, but clearly tell them what is bothering you at the moment. Be careful not to be a hypocrite and to say one thing instead of another or, perchance, to present things that you have done as though they were the deeds of a third party. Tell the truth and be prepared, so that with willingness you will perform whatever is appointed to you. You can fool yourself in various ways, but not the Elders whom you consult.

When you ask an Elder about warfare, do not yield to the thoughts which speak to you from within, but to the words of the Elder. At the outset, beseech God, saying: "Be merciful unto me and enlighten my spiritual Fathers, that they may tell me those things which are necessary." And that which the Fathers appoint to you, carry it out with faith, and God will give you rest. If you are weak and fall to the passions, do not let anyone tell you his impassioned thoughts, as if you were strong and invulnerable; for this deed will be the ruination of your soul. Do not reveal your thoughts to everyone, so as not to be a scandal to your Fathers and so that the Grace of God might cover you.

D. From Abba Cassian

While once visiting the Holy Fathers who lived in Sketis, we went also to Abba Moses, a man lofty in virtue and wise in the things of God. When we arrived at his cell, and after certain spiritually beneficial discussions, we asked him as well about the confession of thoughts—how this should be done.

"Many brothers," we told him, "from shame and a wrong understanding of piety, do not confess their thoughts; and this because many

confessors, after hearing the thoughts of the brothers, not only fail to treat them, but so criticize them that they cause the brothers to despair. We know of one such case ourselves, which occurred in the area of Syria.

"In this case, a brother confessed his thoughts to one of the Fathers there, and with complete openness and sincerity. He bared his heart without shame, in order to reveal his hidden thoughts to the Elder. The Elder, when he heard these thoughts, started to become indignant and to speak against the brother, condemning him for his obscene thoughts. As soon as the Elder's behavior became known, others were ashamed to confess their thoughts to the Elders."

Abba Moses answered us:

"My children, it is indeed good not to hide our thoughts from the Fathers, but freely and openly to confess them. Let us not follow our own judgment, but let us submit ourselves unhesitatingly to their testing. However, we must not entrust the hidden things of our hearts to just anyone, but to spiritual Elders who have discernment and to whose worthiness many have testified—and not just by the number of years they have had gray hair. For many, attending only to age and external appearances, have entrusted their thoughts to inexperienced and undiscerning men, and in this way have fallen into despair on account of their Elders' inexperience.

"There was a certain brother who was very earnest. Now, he happened to be troubled by the demon of fornication. He went immediately to an Elder and confessed to him his thoughts. This Elder, however, being inexperienced, became indignant when he heard the brother's confession and called him a wretch, deeming him unworthy of the monastic habit, since he had such thoughts. When the brother heard the Elder's words, he despaired of his salvation and, abandoning the place of his asceticism, returned to the world. However, by Divine Providence he encountered Abba Apollo, one of the most experienced Elders. Seeing the brother so depressed, Abba Apollo asked him:

"'My brother, what is the cause of your worry?'

"At first, the brother, under the weight of his great sorrow, said nothing in reply.

"Later, however, since the Elder did not cease asking him to reveal the cause of his great sorrow, the brother began to relate what had happened to him:

"'I am troubled, Father,' he said, 'by thoughts of fornication, and I went to confess them to a certain Elder. But he told me that there was no salvation for me. So after this, I lost any hope, and I am going back to the

world.'

"Hearing this, Father Apollo began patiently to console the brother and to counsel him.

"'Do not go into a strange land, my child,' he said, 'and do not lose hope. For even I, despite the fact that I am old in age, am troubled by these thoughts. Do not worry, therefore, about this intense burning, which is not so much cured by human effort as by Christ's love of man. I beg you, do me this favor. Grant me one day and turn back to your cell.'

"The brother obeyed the advice of the Elder and returned to his cell. After Abba Apollo had settled the brother into his cell, he went to that Elder who, by his stern words, had caused the brother to lose hope. He stood outside his cell and tearfully implored God. 'My Lord,' he said, 'Who establishes all things for our benefit and allows temptations to come to us for our good, hear this, my request, and cause the warfare that besets the brother to turn upon this Elder here, so that he might now learn, in his advanced years, that which for so many years he did not manage to learn: that we must also suffer along with those against whom war is waged.'

"When he had finished this short prayer, he saw standing near the cell a black creature, who began to shoot arrows at the Elder. Forthwith, the Elder jumped up and, as if drunk, spun around this way and that. When he was unable to bear any more, he left his cell in a fury and took the same road which the younger brother had taken in returning to the world.

"When Abba Apollo saw him leaving in this way, he understood at once what was happening and, running ahead by another road, overtook the Elder.

"'Where are you going,' he asked him. 'What is the reason for the great agitation which has taken possession of you?'

"The Elder, realizing that the Saint knew everything, out of shame said nothing in reply.

"'Return to your cell,' Abba Apollo then said to him. 'And now, knowing your weakness, understand that either the Devil has been unaware of you or has ignored you, and that for this reason you have not been made worthy to struggle with him. All that has occurred is proof that you are unable to bear his attacks for even one day. This happened to you because, when you once received a younger brother who was beset by the Enemy of all, you caused him to lose hope, instead of strengthening him in his struggle. You did not heed the wise counsel,

"Deliver them that are drawn unto death and those that are ready to be slain" (Proverbs 24:11); nor did you think of the parable about our Savior, which says: "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench" (Isaiah 42:3). For no one would be able to endure the onslaught of the Enemy, nor would anyone be able to extinguish the flame of nature, did not the Grace of Christ guard over human weakness. Hence, since Divine Providence has been fulfilled for our sake, let us together in prayer ask God to remove from you the scourge which He allowed against you; for He permits us to be wounded and yet again restores us. He has touched us, and His hands have healed us. He "bringeth low and lifteth up." He "killeth and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up" (I Kings 2:6-7).'

"After Abba Apollo had said these things and had blessed him, the Elder was immediately released from his warfare. The Abba further advised the Elder to ask God to grant him the skill of teaching, so that he would know what to say whenever he was asked for guidance."

Now, from what we have said, we learn that there is no safer road to salvation than for each person to confess his thoughts to the most discerning of the Fathers and, through them, to be directed towards virtue, never following his own will or judgment. If a person has by chance dealt with some Elder or other person less skilled or experienced, he should not, for this reason, hide his thoughts and fail to confess to more capable Fathers. Dealings with a few inexperienced confessors should not shake one's trust towards everyone. Just as we examine a medical doctor's scientific capability beforehand, so we should examine the Elder to whom we are about to reveal our thoughts; and then only should we reveal to him our spiritual wounds and submit to the therapy which he recommends, accepting it willingly, even if for the moment it causes us pain.

E. From St. Barsanouphios

A brother asked an Elder:

a) "Tell me, Father, whom should I ask about my thoughts? And if it is necessary, should I also ask another confessor, as well, about the same thoughts?"

The Elder answered:

"You must ask him in whom you have trust and whom you know to be able to take on the thoughts of others, and trust in him as in God. To ask another about the same thought shows a lack of faith and is an

action of the Devil; for, if you are certain that God has spoken to you through the mouth of your Elder, what need is there for you to test God by asking another the same thing?"

b) The brother said:

"If advice is given with regard to some thought which is the source of sorrow and worry, and afterwards the sorrow continues, what must we then think or do?"

"If, after advice is given, the thought continues to grieve the one who has asked for advice from his spiritual Father, this does not occur without reason. It is clear that the one who confessed the thought and heard the counsel of his spiritual Father did not diligently and conscientiously act on the Father's advice. For this reason, one is obligated to correct his error and to do that which he is ordered, since it is not possible for God, Who speaks through the mouths of His Saints, to lie."

c) The brother said:

"Should we then ask the same Elder about the same thing, or not? Because I remember, Father, that I once asked an Elder about a thought of mine, and he advised me not to do a certain thing. When I asked the same Elder once more about the same thing, he told me to do what he had earlier told me not to do. Why does that happen?"

The Elder answered:

"Brother, the judgments of God are a great abyss; nevertheless, know that God variously puts into the mouth of the spiritual Father who is speaking an answer appropriate to the disposition of the heart of the one asking, sometimes putting the hearer to the test, in other cases letting him hear, at two different times, different answers from the same spiritual Father, since from one instance to the next the disposition of the heart of the one asking may have changed. In other words, it happens that some change spiritually, even though they may be subject to the same external conditions, and thus God speaks to them in a different way through the mouth of His holy man.

"As an example, let us recall the case of King Hezekiah. The Prophet Isaiah said to him: 'Set thine house in order [prepare a will—*Trans.*]: for thou shalt die and not live' (Isaiah 38:1). This news caused a change in the heart of the King, and he grieved. Through the same holy man, the Prophet Isaiah, God told him: 'Behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years' (Isaiah 38:5). If God should speak through someone else, then the matter would constitute a scandal, since two holy men would be saying two different things. Then again, God spoke through Jonah to the hearts of the Ninevites, telling them: 'Yet three days and Nineveh shall be over-

thrown' (Jonah 3:4). When, however, the disposition of the Ninevites' hearts changed and they repented, God showed His great love of mankind and did not destroy the city, since many of the citizens had become good. For this reason, one should not change the holy man whom he consults, but, again, should consult him as often as the need presents itself, until God inspires his confessor to give another answer, if there is actually a reason for this. Thus it is that the same spiritual Father offers different advice, so that a scandal might not occur."

d) The brother said:

"If, having heard the opinion of my spiritual Father on some matter that I bring up, I realize that things have not developed as the Elder told me, then what should I think or do, in order to remove the doubt to which I have fallen?"

The Elder answered:

"The answer you are seeking is similar to the previous one. How? Listen: Your spiritual Father has counselled you on a certain matter, that you should do thus, and you encountered an obstacle—correct? You must first examine yourself, lest your heart took pleasure in this fact or, perhaps, you did not leave the matter wholly to God, and for this reason God did not allow things to happen in accordance with the advice given to you by the Elder. If you investigate with care and find that things are thus, then know that the reason for things not going as the Elder said lies with you; and thus you should not attribute this circumstance to the advice of the spiritual Father, but should blame yourself. Elissaios confidently sent his servant to resurrect the dead child, but he was not resurrected; the blame lies not with the sender but with the one sent; for how else can it be explained that Elissaios himself later resurrected the child? (IV Kings 4:29-35).

"Therefore, you are obligated beforehand to endeavor with all your strength to apply the counsel of the Elder. If, however, it occurs that things do not come out as you expected, despite your diligence, know, then, that some change has occurred someplace; or that this circumstance has caused you pleasure, as I said earlier; or that either circumstances or the intentions of the parties concerned in the matter have changed; and that, for this reason, God has changed the advice of the Elders in accordance with each situation, as in the case of Hezekiah and the Ninevites.

"Now, if the Elder whom you consulted is not available, in order to ask his further advice, pray to God, invoking the Elder's name: 'O God, do not allow me to fall into error and to be far removed from Thy Will

and from the advice that Thy servant has given me, but instruct me as to what I should do.' Then do as God instructs you, believing that God spoke to you through His holy one and that He is guiding you. You should know that most certainly something has changed and that, on account of this, God changed, as well, the advice which you were earlier given."

e) The brother said:

"Tell me, my Master, how many times do I need to pray in order for my mind to grasp God's instructions?"

The Elder answered:

"When you cannot ask the Elder, you must pray three times about every concern, afterwards carefully examining where your heart is inclined, paying attention even to the smallest of details; then you must do what your heart tells you—for this knowledge comes from God and is certainly revealed in the heart."

f) The brother said:

"How should I pray these three times—at intervals or at the same time? Sometimes the matter cannot be delayed."

The Elder answered:

"If you have time, you should pray three times for three days. If, however, there is some pressing need, as at the hour when the Savior was delivered up to the Romans—a rare instance—take as an example Christ Himself, Who three times in a row left to pray, repeating the same thing three times over—though, in this instance, ostensibly without being heard, since all had to occur according to Divine Providence. In this way, the Lord taught us not to be sorrowful when we pray and are not, for the moment, heard; for He knows better than we what is in our best interests. Let us not, then, be found far from giving thanks to God, and we shall be saved."

g) The brother said:

"If, after praying, the answer is slow in coming, what should I do? If this lateness occurs because of my own culpability, yet I am not able to recognize it, how will I finally realize this?"

The Elder said:

"If you pray three times, but after the third time an answer does not come to your soul, then you should learn that the fault originates in you; and if this fault is yet not revealed to you, then you should reproach yourself, and God will have mercy on you."

h) The brother said:

"When someone consults the Fathers and receives various counsels

from them, how many of these counsels is he obligated to carry out, so as not to transgress any of them?"

The Elder answered:

"Certainly one has no obligation to carry out all of the counsels, but only those which are given as commands. Simple Godly counsel is one thing; but a command is another. In other words, counsel is an admonishment without compulsion, indicating to a person the straight way of life, while a command is placed on him as a yoke, and it is of necessity demanded from one who accepts this command that he carry it out."

i) The brother said:

"Father, you have told me the difference between a command and counsel according to God. Please clarify now for me, then, the characteristics of each one and what strengths each of these has."

The Elder answered:

"If you go to a spiritual Father to ask him about a matter, not to receive a command, but to hear Godly counsel, and the spiritual Father tells you that you should do something, you are by all means obligated to follow that advice, even if during the execution of it you experience sorrow—in which case you should not be disturbed, since this occurs for your benefit. If, on the other hand, you do not wish to apply simple advice given to you by a spiritual Father, you are not considered to be transgressing a command, since you were not given what you heard in the form of a command; nonetheless, you are overlooking your best interests, and for this reason you should reproach yourself. For you should trust that whatever comes from the mouths of holy men is for the benefit of those who hear it.

"This holds even if you ask nothing at all, but are advised by the Elder on his own initiative, he being enlightened through a thought inspired by God, which is a thing that sometimes happens. For example, a certain brother was once planning, in his mind, to go into the city. An older spiritual Father, on his own initiative, told him that if he were to go into the city, he would fall into fornication. The brother disobeyed the Elder and went into the city, where he indeed fell into fornication. If, now, you ask about something, wanting to receive a specific command from your spiritual Father, then you are obligated to make a prostration before the one who gave the command, that he might bless you, saying to him at the same time: 'My Father, give me your blessing on this command and pray that I might fulfill it.'

"Realize, brother, that the Elder who gives you the command does not simply give a command, but helps you by his supplication and his

prayers, so that you will be able to fulfill it. If perchance you do not make a prostration before him to get his blessing, do not think that the command is not to be fulfilled (for even thus it remains in force); you have but received the command inappropriately and in a servile manner. And if you are able, do not be wary of returning to make a prostration before your spiritual Father and to ask his blessing. If, however, you are unable to do this, then consider yourself to have received the command with negligence on your part."

j) The brother again asked:

"Father, what if I consult an Elder for a command and the Elder does not intend to give me a command, but all of what he says is told to me in the form of advice? Or the opposite: What if I do not ask to receive a command, but the Elder gives me a command? Is this then considered a command, and must I, in any case, fulfill it? As well, there are, as you know, ecclesiastical Canons and the opinions of Fathers written in texts. Are we to consider all of these *commands*, and is it necessary to follow them *without fail*?"

The Elder answered:

"If the Elder whom you ask does not intend to give a command, then all that he tells you is not to be taken as a command for you, even if you requested it. If, however, the Elder himself decides to give you a command, even if you did not ask for it, all that he advises you should consider a command—and it is necessary for you to fulfill it. From among the ecclesiastical Canons, we should accept as commands only those which refer to matters of dogma. Likewise, do not indiscriminately apply those Patristic counsels which are formulated as directives, but apply them only if you consult spiritual Fathers and Elders and, through their opinions, verify these thoughts; for it is possible that you might not always understand correctly the deeper meaning of Patristic texts and Canons. For this reason we must consult the Elders and respect their advice. Let us give great attention to this; let us be obedient; and let us keep inviolate all that we have heard, through the help of the God Who loves mankind and through the prayers of the Saints. Amen."

k) And again the brother said:

"And if I transgress a command, through the influence of some temptation, what should I do?"

The Elder answered:

"If you receive a command from a certain holy man and violate it, do not be in despair; neither lose hope nor think to abolish it, but remember him who said: 'For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up

again' (Proverbs 24:16), just as the Lord also, Who said to Peter that he had to forgive his brother 'until seventy times seven' (St. Matthew 18:22). If, then, God gave to mankind the command to forgive so many times, how much more will He Himself do the same, since He is rich in mercy and compassion and is victorious in all things? Elsewhere, this same One cries out daily through His prophet: 'Turn ye unto Me..., and I shall turn unto you (Zachariah 1:3); for I am merciful and desire not the death of the sinner (Ezekiel 33:11),' and so on.

"Take care, lest, hearing that a command abolished by transgression can be restored through repentance, you become indifferent and fall into neglect; for this is a very serious thing. Also, do not ignore a command with regard to things which may seem inconsequential; but if a certain omission occurs in these things, take care to correct them, keeping in mind that from indifference to small things one can also end up in great errors."

l) The brother said:

"The thought comes to me not to consult holy men, so that, not learning what is correct and not perhaps later, through my weakness, disregarding it, I will thus avoid sin."

The Elder answered:

"This thought is very fearful and sinister. Therefore, do not entertain it. For if one sins after he learns what is right, he reproaches himself for his sin. If he does not learn the right thing and sins, then he will never reproach himself as one who has fallen, and on this account his sins will remain unhealed. For this reason, the Devil exposes men to such thoughts, so that they will remain unhealed. When the thought comes to mind, therefore, that perchance, on account of human weakness, you will be unable to follow the advice of your Elder, then you should consult the Elder, saying: 'Father, since I want to do this, explain its benefit to me. I realize that even though you have so advised me, I cannot carry through and hold to your word; but I want to know about this and wish at least to be instructed, so that I might reproach myself for neglecting what was in my interest.' This admission is also humbling for you. May the Lord, then, enlighten your heart, so that you will hear and be preserved by the prayers of the Saints. Amen."

m) And again the brother asked:

"Father, tell me why, when I am at times tyrannized by temptations and beseech the Elders to pray for me, and I hear what they tell me, my soul is immediately put at ease?"

The Elder answered:

"When a ship is endangered by waves, if it has a capable captain, he, by the wisdom given to him by God, can save the ship; and when the ship is saved, the passengers rejoice. And one who is ill is not so gladdened by the reputation of the physician as by the physician's efforts themselves. And is he who is threatened on a journey by thieves who are ready to attack him not little strengthened by the voices of the soldiers guarding him, but much more by their presence? If, then, things are so, what joy and security the advice of the Fathers can provide to those who hear it, since this advice is accompanied by intense and warm prayer to God, Who says: 'Pray one for another, that ye may be healed' (St. James 5:16). These Fathers make their own the sufferings of others, crying to Jesus, their common Master, saying to Him with the sweetest tears, 'Master, save us, we perish' (St. Luke 8:24).

"Since then, the supplications of the just man have so much power, when they are made with warmth and zeal, as the Holy Scriptures say, let us not neglect to implore the righteous to pray for us. For, even if we are unworthy, our good Master values the person of His servants, and, as He has already so many times done, will have mercy on us. Thus, the Scripture says: 'He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him' (Psalm 144:19); 'The righteous cried, and the Lord heard them, and delivered them out of all their afflictions' (Psalm 33:18).

"Brother, many times have robbers fled, hearing the voices of those stronger than they. The same happens with spiritual thieves as well, when they hear the voice of those stronger than they in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, who hear from their Master and protector Jesus, 'Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world' (St. John 16:33), and 'Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you' (St. Luke 10:19). The thieves thus leave, terrified and ashamed.

"Let us therefore beseech the Saints to pray for us and let us make them our protectors; for our benefit will be great."

F. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Poimen said: "Never entrust your conscience to him about whom your heart is not informed by Grace."

2. Once a brother who had fallen into a great sin came to Abba Lot. He was possessed by anguish and agitation and was continuously going in and coming out, without being able to sit down. The Elder, seeing

the monk's agitation, said to him:

"What is wrong with you, brother?"

"I have committed a great sin and I am unable to confess it," answered the monk.

"Confess it," the Elder replied, "and I will lift it."

So, the monk fell to the ground and said to Abba Lot:

"I fell into fornication, doing everything to accommodate this sin."

After the Elder heard this confession, he gave the brother his hand and, after raising him up, said to him:

"Have courage, my child, for there is repentance. Go to the cave, sit there closed inside, and fast for two days continuously, and I will take on myself half of the burden of your sin."

Thus, the brother went to the place of repentance and did as the Elder had ordered. A period of three weeks' time passed. Abba Lot was informed that God had received both his supplication and the repentance of the monk and had forgiven the sin. Immediately, then, he called the brother and revealed to him the mercy of God. From that time until his death, the brother remained in obedience to the Elder.

3. Once a monk visited Abba Poimen and said to him:

"Father, what must I do? I am bothered very much by thoughts of fornication. I went to Abba Ibistion, who told me: 'You must not allow these perverse thoughts to linger for any time in your soul.'"

Abba Poimen answered him:

"The deeds of Abba Ibistion are like those of the Angels in Heaven, and he forgets the fact that you and I are weak and are always troubled by perverse thoughts. Take courage and know, my child, that if a monk restrains his stomach and his tongue and remains separated from the world, he will not die."

4. A monk was bothered by the temptation of fornication. He therefore went to a great and renowned Elder and, after he had confessed his thoughts to him, asked the Elder to pray for him.

When the monk returned to his cell, he was troubled yet again. And again he went to the Elder, confessed to him a second time the same thing, and begged him to pray for him. The Elder agreed and began again to beseech God with fervor. Among other things, he said in his prayer: "Lord reveal to me how this brother can battle his temptation and where the benefit is in his prolonged struggle with this demonic thing; for I besought Thee with fervor, and yet he did not find rest."

And indeed God revealed to the Elder the life of the brother. He saw him sitting near the demon of fornication; next to him, there was also an Angel of the Lord, who had been sent to assist him. The Angel was outraged with the brother, since he did not rely totally on the help of God. In other words, he did not struggle to repel the unclean thoughts with zealous prayer. Quite the opposite. He enjoyed these thoughts and gave himself over to them with all of his mind. The Elder immediately realized, therefore, that the source of the temptation was the monk himself. He called him and informed him of this. "You are the reason," he told him, "that the war against you has not yet fled; for you find these thoughts pleasurable and succumb to them." So, the Elder taught him how he must resist the onslaught of these thoughts and to expel them through prayer. The monk came to his senses, thanks to the teaching and prayer of the Elder, and thus found respite for his soul.

5. Another brother, who also was embattled by unclean thoughts about falling into fornication, went to an Elder and begged him to pray for him, so that the warfare against him might subside. The Elder agreed to do so, imploring God on the monk's behalf for seven days. On the seventh day, he asked the brother:

"Brother, how goes the war?"

"Very badly," the monk answered. "I have experienced no relief in myself."

As soon as the Elder heard this, he was astonished and asked God to reveal to him the reason that the warfare against the brother had not subsided. That night, Satan appeared to him and told him: "Elder, I assure you that from the first day that you began to beg God, I departed from the brother. He, however, has his own demon and his own war, because of his gluttony. In other words, I have no part in his warfare. He fights himself, eating and drinking and sleeping a great deal. He does not simply satisfy himself, but overindulges."

6. A monk asked an Elder:

"Father, if a certain worry comes to me, and I can find no one in whom to confide my torment, what should I do?"

The Elder answered:

"I believe that God will send His Grace to help you, if you truly beseech Him. Listen to a pertinent story. There was once a struggler in a skete. Listening to the thoughts of another, he himself fell into sinful thoughts. Since he was unable to entrust them to anyone, because in his

soul he felt no trust for anyone that he knew, he took the sheepskin which he used as an overcoat and prepared to depart for another place. But behold, the Grace of God appeared before him as a virgin and counselled him as follows. "Go nowhere, but stay here with me. Know that nothing bad resulted from all that you heard." Indeed, the monk was persuaded by this messenger from God and remained; and immediately his heart was healed.

G. From St. Barsanouphios

A brother questioned an Elder, saying:

"Father, must I seek the counsel of the Elders for all of the temptations which take root in my heart?"

"It is not necessary," answered the Elder, "for someone to be questioned about all the temptations which occur in his heart, for they pass away. For example, a man can be insulted by others, yet ignore the insults and not concern himself with them; if, however, one of those insulting him bothers him or attacks him, then he must report him to the authorities. In other words, he will go to the authorities and submit a charge against the one who has attacked him. The same thing happens with temptations, too. That is, we must reveal to our spiritual Fathers only those things which attack us or remain in our soul for a long time."

The brother said:

"How does it happen that I find fault with others after I have confessed?"

"You criticize others even after confession," answered the Elder, "because within you reigns a disposition toward vindication, which has not died; criticize yourself and the condemnation will pass from you to others."

Hypothesis XXII

Concerning the fact that he who wishes to be saved must avoid meetings with careless men and must avoid disturbances, and that estrangement from worldly affairs is necessary for him.

A. From Palladios to Lausus the Prefect

Avoid as much as possible associating with men who cannot be of any help to you and who adorn themselves inappropriately (let alone with monks who are indistinguishable in their demeanor from worldly men). By their hypocrisy, they harm those whom they meet—even if, because of their gray hair or the wrinkles on their faces, they appear to be very distinguished. Though you may seem to suffer no harm from them, on account of their good manners, nonetheless that which seems to be least significant to you can wound you. By the same token, should you lower your guard and become haughty and ridicule them, this too will damage you, because you will thereby be led into pride.

B. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

A Deacon who lived in the regions of Nursia went to Florentius the ascetic and man of God (who had left the world and was living as a hermit), in order to entrust himself to the latter's prayers. Now, the Deacon found outside this man's cell a countless multitude of snakes, which had occupied almost the entire place. Struck with panic at this sight, he cried out: "Servant of God, pray!" Incidentally, the weather that day was amazingly good. When Florentius came out of his cell and saw that numberless mass of snakes, he raised his eyes and hands to the sky and besought God to remove that fearful plague, as the Lord best knew. While Florentius was praying, the sky was suddenly filled with thunder, and the thunder slew all of the snakes. When he saw all of them dead, he said: "Behold, O Lord, Thou hast slain them; who, then, will remove them from here?" As soon as he had spoken, as many birds came as there were snakes that had been slain. They carried off the snakes and hurled them far away, thereby clearing that entire place.

Peter

What were the power and righteousness of this man that, by his supplication, Almighty God drew so near to him?

Gregory

Peter, both the purity and the innocence of the human heart can achieve much before Him Who is alone pure and innocent in nature. For His true servants are separated from earthly things and do not know how to say anything idle; nor do they allow their minds to be distracted by empty words. Hence, they find that God more readily listens to them than to other men, since they are eager to become, as far as they can, like Him in purity and innocence. But because we, involved as we are with the cares and troubles of laymen, more frequently utter idle and shameful words, the closer we bring our mouth to the world, the further we distance it from Almighty God.

Many of us, then, are diverted to the things below, in that we easily come into contact with worldly people. Rightly deeming himself wretched after seeing the King, the Lord of Sabaoth, Isaiah said: "Woe is me, for I am pricked to the heart, because I am unclean and have unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). He showed how it was that he had unclean lips by adding: "I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." He felt pain at the impurity of his own lips, but made clear whence he had derived that impurity, when he testified that he dwelt in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for it is impossible for the mind not to be sullied by the tongues of worldly people.

Insofar as we descend entirely to their level when we encounter them, we gradually become accustomed to associating with them, which is not fitting for us; and then, gladly maintaining this contact, we no longer want to turn aside from it—rather, it gets the better of us by force of habit. Hence, it comes about that we fall from idle words into harmful ones, and thereby from trifling words into grievous ones; and so it is that our mouths will not be heard by God when we make entreaties, the more defiled they are by vain associations. As it is also written, if a man turns his ear away from hearing the law of God, his prayer will be rejected.

Why is it surprising, thus, if, when we ask for something from the Lord, He is slow to hear us? After all, when we receive commands from Him, we either obey Him slowly or not at all. It is not surprising, then,

that Florentius received a speedier response to his prayer, since he was quick to obey the commands of the Lord.

C. From the Life of St. Anthony

St. Anthony dearly loved spending time on his mountain. Once, he was pressed by those in need. At the insistence of the Governor of the region, he finally went down to the city and, after having said a few words about salvation and about how we ought to act, he hastened to return to the mountain.

The Governor, however, demanded that he delay his return.

"I cannot spend time here in the city," St. Anthony replied.

To persuade the Governor of this, he gave the following charming illustration: "Just as fish die when they linger on dry land, so monks are destroyed when they extend their stay with you and spend time with you. I must hasten back to the mountain, then, just as the fish must to the sea, lest by lingering I forget to keep watch over my inner self."

D. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother who was hastening to the city asked for the blessing of an Elder. The Elder replied to him: "Do not hasten to the city, but hasten to avoid the city, and you will be saved."

2. When Abba John the Short was at the harvest, he heard a brother speaking angrily to his neighbor: "Ah, you, too." He left the harvest and fled.

3. The disciples of Abba Evlogios related the following story. "When our Elder sent us to Alexandria to sell our handiwork, he ordered us not to take longer than three days. 'If you take more than three days,' he said, 'I am not responsible.' We asked him: 'How is it that the monks in the cities and villages who associate night and day with worldly people are not harmed?' He replied: 'Believe me, my children, after becoming a monk, I did not leave the skete for thirty-eight years. After this period, I once went with Abba Daniel to Patriarch Evsebios in Alexandria for some need. When we entered the city, we saw many monks. I then found myself in a state of ecstasy, and I beheld some of them being pecked by ravens and others being embraced by naked women, who were whispering in their ears. Others were being thrashed by naked

young boys and rubbed with human filth. I saw other men holding knives, chopping up human flesh and giving it to the monks to eat. I realized that whatever the passion to which each of the monks was succumbing, he had corresponding demons escorting him and speaking to his mind. This, brethren, is why I do not want you ever to linger in the city, so that you may not be disturbed by such thoughts—or, rather, *demons.*'"

E. From St. Ephraim

My brothers, you know that when we came to the monastery we renounced the world and all of its attachments. Why, then, should we, who have died to the world and to the affairs and troubles of life, seek to be dragged down again into all of these troubles? Our goal is to find a little sustenance and not to be given over to enjoyments; our hands are sufficient to serve the needs of the body, with the help of the Lord. *Let us flee the world, then, and worldly things,* and let us not allow ourselves to approach the world, lest we break our promise; for "no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (II St. Timothy 2:4). And again: "We work with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you" (II Thessalonians 3:8).

For if, when we sit and keep silence in our cells, we are unable to resist with courage the thoughts prompted by the passions and the phantom of worldly affairs, how shall we not be more easily caught if we throw ourselves into the encampment of our foes? If you approach the city or the village out of necessity, with the permission of the Abbots, you are blameless, as long as you carry out the order given to you with the fear of God. For there are those who, on the pretext of obedience, wish to fulfill their own desires, following the old man; but you must be wise and see that you do not gain mud and filth, instead of gold and silver, and that you do not practice disobedience rather than obedience.

For what benefit did they receive, who were sent out with Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb to reconnoître the land, yet did not maintain the truth but diverted the hearts of the sons of Israel away from the Lord, when they returned and told lies (Numbers 14)? To be sure, they did not practice obedience, but rather disobedience, and for this reason they themselves perished with the people. So, then, when you are sent out on an errand, *do as you are ordered with the fear of God,* in the belief that God is watching what you do. Do not add or take anything away or do

anything according to your own will, but perform everything with regard for the goal and the will of him who gave you your orders; and then you will have an exceedingly great reward for your service. Know, my brother, that *he who loves associating with worldly people has not yet come to disdain the world;* for just as one who starts a fire stirs up flames, so also conversations with worldly people arouse passions in the hearts of monks.

F. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)

It is good in truth and exceedingly beneficial, my brother, to avoid inappropriate relations with worldly people and to remove ourselves far away from the damage that they can cause. For they talk about the vanities of the present age, and when the mind takes in these things, it becomes debilitated, ceases to engage in spiritual tasks, and relaxes the intensity of its asceticism; and after the worldly people depart, it is grieved,* since it has not performed its rule of prayer. This is why ascetic strugglers sought the deserts, so as to get away from all this worldly vanity and to converse with God unhindered. Just as a maiden who is kept guarded is desired by those outside, but when she emerges is not pleasing to all, and many find fault with her, so also a monk, when he distances himself from people and is devoted to himself and God, and is hidden, is precious to God and the Angels, and even more to men. But when he descends from his lofty vision and way of life, and is entangled in the affairs and associations of this life, he becomes disreputable before God and contemptible to men.

It is advantageous for us, then, to desert worldly people of our own accord, to avoid their conversations—which wholly harm our souls—to lock ourselves in our cells, and thus be saved like a gazelle from the noose and like a bird from the snare [*cf.* Proverbs 6:5]. For relations with people in the world, of no benefit and loquacious as they are, are truly nooses and snares for those who wish to be saved. They occupy the mind and separate it from sweet converse with God and the inclination toward Him, and make us prate with our own vanity.

What, then, do we who are outside the world have in common with worldly affairs, that we should still wish to learn about them? For the monk who has renounced the world and placed his neck under the sweet yoke of the Lord no longer has authority over himself, but hastens, without ever turning back, to cleave the furrows in the hollows of humility, which abound in Divine wheat and are drenched with the

heavy rain of the heavenly and life-bestowing Spirit, by Whose drops the soul is gladdened and gushes forth Divine thoughts. Indeed, he who wishes to live in peace and to converse with God unceasingly, with a mind undistracted, should neither associate with many people nor be constantly leaving his cell.

If such a one ever needs to associate with anyone, he should have contact with spiritual Fathers, or fellow-strugglers, or other monks who require help; for such contact is reckoned to be conducive to theological discussion, and in any case he will either benefit or be benefited. Should worldly people approach us for spiritual aid, let us converse with them only by few words, seasoned with Divine salt, and dismiss them; for they will be more edified by a short spiritual conversation than by a lengthy worldly discussion. Above all, let us work with them by prayer and teach them virtue through our deeds; for while it is good to help inquirers through our words, it is far better to work with them through virtue and prayer.

G. From Abba Isaiah

Abba Isaiah said: "If anyone speaks unprofitable words to you, do not listen to him, lest you destroy your soul. Do not let such a person embarrass you into going along with him. Do not put up with his words by saying, 'In my heart I do not accept them'; do not say this, for you are not superior to the first-formed man, whom God fashioned with His Own hand and who was harmed by evil conversation with the serpent. Run away, then, and do not listen. Be sure that, when you flee bodily, you do not try to find out what it is that you missed; for if you hear the slightest bit of a word, the demons will not only not fail to exploit the fragment that you heard, but will slay your soul with it. *When you flee, flee completely.*"

H. From Abba Mark

Do not listen to other people's wicked words; for in your desire to do so, the impressions of the wicked words are engraved on your soul. When you hear evil words, be angry with yourself, not with the man who spoke them; *for he who repeats wicked tidings is also wicked.*

I. From Abba Isaac

Avoid acquisitive people and avoid acquiring things yourself, removing yourself from those who live luxuriously, as well as from luxury itself. Avoid licentious people as you would licentiousness. For if the mere recollection of words disturbs the mind, how much more disturbing it is to converse and to spend time with those who utter them! Draw near to righteous men, and through them you will draw near to God. Associate with those who possess humility, and you will learn their character by experience; for if it is beneficial merely to contemplate your memories of these people, how much more beneficial is the instruction of their own mouths!

J. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Seven brothers once came from Alexandria to Abba Makarios, in order to test him, and they said: "Tell us, Father, how we are to be saved." The Elder said with a groan: "Brethren, each of us knows how he is saved, but we do not want to be saved." They said to him: "We very much want to be saved, but evil thoughts do not allow us; what, then, should we do?" The Elder replied to them: *"If you are monks, why do you consort with worldly people or go near places where worldly people live?* Those who have renounced the world and wear the holy *schema*, yet abide among worldly people, are deceiving themselves; for all of their labor is in vain and they are far from the fear of God. From worldly people monks gain nothing other than respite for the flesh; and where there is fleshly respite, there the fear of God cannot dwell, and especially in a monk.

"For the monk is called a monk precisely because he converses with God night and day, and thinks only of Divine things, having nothing on the earth. A monk who spends time with worldly people or stays with them for more than a day, or two at the most, does this out of necessity or because he cannot survive in any other way, having either to sell his handiwork or to buy what he needs. Returning speedily to his monastery, he offers genuine repentance to God for the one day or two days which he spent in the world to take care of the indispensable necessities of life.

"Now the monk who does not do this, but continually approaches worldly people without any pressing need, or whiles away his time with them, is not strictly speaking a monk; and will never derive any benefit, but will rather garner the following from spending time with worldly people: At the outset, when he approaches them, he may re-

strain his tongue, fast, and humble himself, until he becomes known and the report goes out that such and such a monk is a servant of God. Then, immediately, Satan prompts worldly people to bring him everything he needs by way of wine and money and anything else, saying of him: 'He is a holy man, a holy man.' When he hears 'holy man,' the poor fellow is puffed up and begins to sit with them eating, drinking, and relaxing; when he stands up and chants, he raises his voice so that the worldly people may say that such and such a monk chants and keeps vigil and that they may praise him. As a result of these praises, he swells up with greater pride, and then humility completely departs from him.

"So, then, if anyone speaks a harsh word to him, he replies more harshly, and thus his anger, aided by vainglory, increases enormously inside him; and carnal desire is kindled more intensely within him, as he continually beholds women and children and hears worldly sayings. Hence, he commits adultery every day without realizing it, for the Lord says: 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart' (St. Matthew 5:28).

"Subsequently, he attempts to gather together what he needs for the whole year, both for his own sake and for that of his visitors; next, he doubles these supplies, supposedly in order to offer greater refreshment to those who visit him; and as a result of this, he collects gold and silver. He does not cease, then, adding to his evils, until the demons finally laugh at him, as they remove him from God and plunge him into the abyss of avarice. For the love of money is the root of all evils, as the Apostle said (I St. Timothy 6:10), and as far as Heaven is from the earth, so far is the avaricious monk from the glory of God. Indeed, there is no evil greater than a monk who loves money.

"A monk who consorts with worldly people *truly needs the prayers of many Holy Fathers, with the hope that they can help him even to the smallest extent.* For who is there to help one who is throwing himself to death? Do we not hear the Apostle John saying: '*Love not the world,* neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of God the Father is not in him' (I St. John 2:15)? And James the Brother of God saying: 'Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God' (St. James 4:4); for the friendship of the world is hostile to God.

"Let us, then, flee from the world, brethren, as one flees from a serpent; for if one is bitten by a serpent, he either dies or with difficulty regains his health. It is to our advantage to have one war, and not many and countless wars. Tell me, brethren: Where did our Fathers acquire the virtues—in the world or in the desert? Clearly in the desert, which

was inaccessible to worldly people. How shall we acquire virtue if we are in the world? For if we do not hunger and thirst and shiver, and are not far removed from the material goods of the world, and do not die to the wishes of the flesh, how shall we live spiritually? How shall we attain to the Kingdom of Heaven? Indeed, if a soldier does not wage war and conquer, and if, further, he does not tender booty, he is not deemed worthy of honor; we who eat and drink, while remaining in the midst of the worldly people among whom we lived previously, how then shall we be vouchsafed the Kingdom of Heaven?

"*A monk who has gold, silver, and material possessions* does not believe that God, Who nourishes the beasts and monsters in the sea, is able to nourish him; and if He cannot provide us with bread, He cannot give us His Kingdom. To what end, then, do we toil? Tell me, brethren, do the Angels in Heaven *gather gold and silver, or the glory of God?* Why, then, have we renounced the world: *to collect money and material goods again, or to become Angels?* Or do you not know that the Angelic rank that fell from Heaven is to be replaced by monks? For this is evident from our *schema*, which everyone calls Angelic."

2. A brother asked Abba Poimen: "What should I do about the harmful friendships that I have?" The Elder replied: "Is there a man who, in the throes of death, cares about the friendships of this world? Do not go near them or touch them, and they will be removed from you."

3. An Elder said: "He who has sinned before God should separate himself from every human contact, until he is informed that God has become his friend once more; for the love of men impedes us from the love of God."

4. An Elder said: "Just as someone who dies in the city neither hears the voice of anyone there, nor perceives anything happening in it, but is transferred to another place, where the voices and cries of the city do not reach him, so it is with the monk: when he renounces the world and embraces the monastic life, he ought to be dead to every worldly attachment and to the distraction and toil of a vain and soul-destroying life, putting himself far away from these. If after renouncing the world, he does not depart from his homeland, but is in the midst of his prior disturbances, such a monk is like a corpse lying in a house and stinking, from which all who have smelled it run far away."

5. The same Elder said: "Unsalted meats that have not been seasoned rot and stink, so that all who are nearby turn their eyes away because of the stench; but worms are born and crawl in them, and nestle there, eating them. If salt is thrown on them, the worms are destroyed and the stench ceases; for salt has the property of making both disappear. In just the same way, the monk who surrenders himself to earthly thoughts and outer distractions, rather than practicing silence in his monastery (enabling himself by the fear of God not to languish in negligence, restraining himself by meditating on death and the punishments after death, and strengthening his heart by prayer and vigil, which constitute the spiritual salt)—such a monk rots and is filled with the great stench of unclean and evil thoughts, so that the face of God and the elect Angels turn away from him in disgust at the uncleanness of such a soul, removing themselves far away from it. Then the noetic worms, namely, the powers of darkness that always take pleasure in such foul odors, nestle and walk about in the rot and graze, reckoning as sweet food the filth of unclean thoughts and actions, through which the miserable soul is destroyed and goes to perdition.

"If a monk is aware of such damage and casts off outer distractions and, dedicating his whole self to God and hoping in Him entirely, directs his care and preoccupation to pleasing Him, then after a short time God sends him spiritual salt, namely, the good Spirit Who loves mankind. When He comes, all the passions and the demons that operate in and through them immediately disappear and dissipate like smoke."

K. From St. Ephraim

My brother, do not step in mud, and remove yourself from men who strut around without fear of God. A sparrow imprisoned in a cage calls sparrows to its prison; and he who is fettered in sins impels many others to the depth of evils. Decline, my brother, to be with those who love idleness and do not choose to practice silence. Avoid those who love banquets and who say: "I am having you to dinner today, and tomorrow you will entertain me." For if you go along with these words, you will not achieve a virtuous life but will become a habitation of every passion. Imitate those who are fervent in spirit and tread the narrow way of affliction, so that you may attain to eternal life.

* Reading "ἄχθεται" (*achthetai*), rather than "ἄρχεσθαι" (*archesthai*); *cf. Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. LXXXIX, col. 1741B—*Trans.*

Hypothesis XXIII

Concerning the fact that we must keep away from those who harm us, even if they are friends or are otherwise quite indispensable.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Agathon said: "Even if someone is extremely dear to me, but I know that he leads me into faults, I cut him loose from myself."

2. An Elder said: "We must flee from all who work iniquity, even if they be friends or relatives and even if they hold the office of Priest or king; for standing apart from those who work iniquity bestows on us friendship with God and boldness before Him."

3. The same Elder said: "It is not profitable for us to cling to transgressors, neither in Church, nor in the marketplace, nor in the council, nor in any other realm; rather, we must completely refrain from relations with them. For every transgressor is worthy of abhorrence and is condemned to eternal punishment."

4. An Elder said: "Do not live in any place where you see people feeling envy towards you; otherwise you will not make progress."

5. A brother asked an Elder: "If my brother scandalizes me, do you want me to make a prostration to him?" The Elder answered: "Make a prostration, but cut yourself off from him; for we have Abba Arsenios, who said: 'Have love for all men, but keep a distance from all men.'"

B. From St. Ephraim

1. My brethren, we should beware of bad advice. Two men in bright garments were once walking together to the marketplace, when the one, failing to pay attention, stumbled and fell in the mud, totally ruining his fine clothing. Now, moved by envy, he hastened to throw his companion in the mire, so that he might not be the only unsightly one. So also, today, many struggle to trip up others, so that they alone may not

be unsightly. They say humble things and respond sweetly, so as gradually to distract their hearers from sobriety and lead them down into a pit like their own. They are not embarrassed by their shameful actions, but encourage their neighbors by saying: "Why do you loathe us—because we are sinners? Do you not know that life involves falling and getting up again?"

In saying such things, they feel no shame. Why? Because when they have fallen themselves, they have no desire to rise again, as they claim, but are in fact a source of scandal, fall, and corruption to many—and the Devil uses them as bait for his fishhook. They are eager to deceive unstable souls and drag them into the same perdition. For this reason, beware of such people, my beloved; and let them not enchant you with their soft words and send you off to their own eternal fire.

2. A certain brother once gave another advice that was of God. Coincidentally, another brother was passing by, to whom the brother giving advice said: "Look, I am advising my brother, here, and he does not wish to listen to me." The passerby replied: "He ought to listen to you. Forgive me, but it is a joy even to hear something *bad* from you and, further, to act upon it." The brother giving counsel answered: "It is not so. If you do not prove that it is of God, do not listen to me. Not only avoid listening to me, but even to a Prophet, if he advises you contrary to the Will of God; for the Apostle Paul says: 'But though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed' (Galatians 1:8). For who were they that plotted against Susannah in Babylon? Were they not Elders? And not simply Elders, but also judges and leaders of the people? What an end befell them because they did not attend to themselves; and their high office did not help them.*

"Be sober, my brother, and attend to yourself; for many are the wiles of the adversary. Indeed, if the Enemy sees a brother who is zealous in the work of God, he stirs up one of the more negligent brothers against him, so that the latter abuses him unjustly and unreasonably, in order perhaps to lead the struggling brother into anger and the remembrance of wrongs, and in this way to obstruct his path to virtue and prepare him to fall into evil. If he sees him patiently enduring the abuse, and praying for the one who is wronging him, he attempts to overthrow him in another way: He endeavors to make him a friend of one of the inattentive and lazy monks, in order to blur his reasoning through such a friendship and to confuse him with luxury— and perhaps gradually to

reduce him to indifference. But he who fears God will never love anyone without the wisdom from above; for, as it is written: 'The wisdom that is from above is...pure, then peaceable,' and so on (St. James 3:17)."

C. From Abba Isaiah

Abba Isaiah said: "If you wish to follow our Lord Jesus Christ and to crucify your old man with Him, you should cut off those who bring you down from the Cross; and you should prepare yourself to endure abasement and still the hearts of those who provoke you."

D. From Abba Isaac

A foolish and thoughtless friend is a source of destruction; a source of sweetness is the conversation of sensible men. To make the unwise your companion is to bring sorrow to your heart. It is better to dwell with wild beasts than with those who behave badly; indeed, to sit with vultures rather than with a greedy and insatiable man. Better to become the companion of a murderer than a quarrelsome man. Converse with a pig rather than a glutton; for a pig's trough is better than a gluttonous and insatiable mouth. Sit among lepers rather than among arrogant men.

* Susannah was a Judean woman, celebrated for her modesty, and the daughter of Helkiah and the wife of Joachim, from the tribe of Judah, who followed her husband into Babylon at the time of the captivity. One day, having gone out to her garden, on account of the great heat, to bathe, two Israelite judges, who were hidden nearby, fell upon her and threatened that, if she would not fulfill their desire, they would condemn her as an adulteress. In this difficult situation, Susannah preferred to be condemned as an adulteress, rather than sin "before the Lord." In fact, the two judges accused her of adultery with a certain young man, and Susannah was condemned to death. While she was being led to her place of execution, however, Daniel, who was still a child, intervened, exposing the slander of the judges. The people, having been convinced of the slander, as well as the innocence of Susannah, put the slanderers to death. (In this regard, see further the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church* [in Greek], Vol. XII, pp. 541-544, note on the Sunday before the Nativity of Christ.)

Hypothesis XXIV

Concerning the fact that one who has renounced the world should not be entangled at all with earthly affairs, even if they seem justified, but should submit to Divine Providence in these matters also.

A. From the Life of St. Arsenios

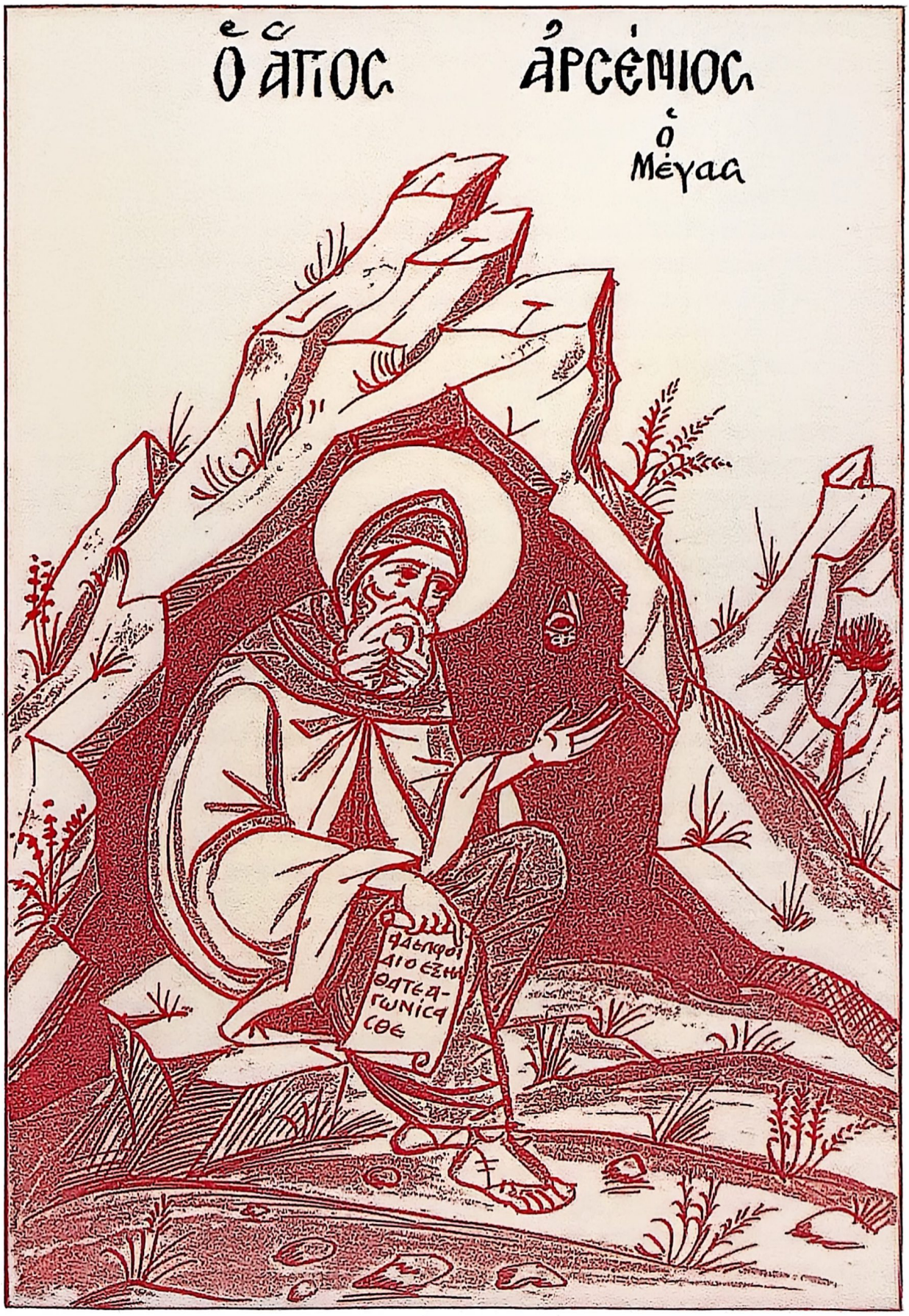
A magistrate came from Rome to Sketis, bringing the will of a relative of Arsenios. The Elder took it in his hands and was on the point of tearing it up, had the magistrate not forestalled him by falling at his feet. He restrained Arsenios, when he informed him that this would cause danger for the one who had brought it. Arsenios gave back the will and said: "*I have died before him* and am no longer among the living."

B. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder said: "Even though the Saints toiled here on earth, they had already received a portion of their refreshment." The Elder meant by this that they were free from the cares of the world.

2. Abba Alonios said: "Unless a man says in his heart, *'Only I and God exist in this world,'* he will not have rest."

3. An Elder said: "A monk who surrenders himself again to the distraction and toil of this wretched life—to giving and receiving things after he has renounced the world—is like a destitute beggar who lacks even necessary sustenance and who, not finding a way of feeding and clothing himself, gives himself to sleep, out of sluggishness. In a dream, he sees that he is rich and has cast off his dirty garments and put on bright clothing. He awakens from his excessive joy and finds that he is just as poor as he was before. So it is with the monk who is not vigilant, but spends his days in distraction, jeered at by his thoughts. He is consumed by the demons, who mock him and suggest that his distraction and toil are for the sake of God, and that because of this he will have rewards. At the hour when his soul is separated from his body, such a monk will



St. Arsenios the Great

find himself destitute and poor, and devoid of all virtue. Then he will realize how many goods vigilance and attention bestow upon oneself, and how many punishments are brought on by the distractions of life."

4. The ruler of the country once imprisoned someone from the village of Abba Poimen. Everyone went to the Elder, begging him to go and procure the man's release. The Elder said: "Leave me for three days, and after this I will go." So he prayed to the Lord: "O Lord, do not grant me this favor, since in the future they will never again allow me to remain here in peace." After three days, he went to the ruler and appealed to him on behalf of the imprisoned man. The ruler said to him: "Abba, you would appeal on behalf of a brigand?" The Elder rejoiced that the ruler refused him the favor.

C. From Abba Isaiah

1. My brother: Know that a man cannot make progress in God, unless he becomes detached from all the cares of this age. For there are two material forces that hinder the soul. One is exterior: it concerns itself with worldly work in order to provide respite for the body. The other is interior: it is the force of the passions, which hinders the virtues. But the soul does not see the interior force of the passions, unless it is freed from the exterior one. This is why the Lord said: "Whosoever he be that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple" (St. Luke 14:33). The exterior force wars from the will, the interior from exterior action. Knowing that *the will dominates both*, our Master *enjoined us to cut it off*, since the spiritual mind [the *nous—Trans.*] is deadened, to the extent that the soul worries about exterior matters, and so the interior passions carry on their activities unhampered.

Thus, if the soul cuts off all its volitions, it comes to disdain every activity and distraction of this world. The mind is then awakened and stands aright, until it casts all the passions from its dwelling-place, attending unceasingly to the soul and guarding it from returning in the future to those things which endangered it. For the soul is like a young woman who has just married and who, when her husband departs for foreign service, becomes fearless and shameless, not thinking seriously about her responsibilities in the home. When her husband comes back to his house, she immediately takes fright, leaves what she was doing, and gives heed to doing her husband's will. When he returns to his house he takes care of everything she needs and guards her unceasingly,

until she gives birth and rears her children.

And then both become one in heart, and the woman submits to her husband, just as, likewise, the soul should submit to the mind, so that the mind becomes the head of the soul, as it is written in the Epistle, that "the husband is the head of the wife" (I Corinthians 11:3). These words of the Apostle, then, are for those who are deemed worthy of becoming one in the Lord, no longer having any separation of soul and mind, just as the Lord taught in the Gospel: "If two of you agree...as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them" (St. Matthew 18:19).

The Lord wants His own, therefore, to be healthy and free from the material force that is manifest and from the force which is hidden in the soul, as well as from everything that He destroyed in the body when He became incarnate; as He Himself said, "Abide in Me, and I in you" (St. John 15:4). For in the first place, He wishes us to abide in Him in that which we do, in which case He abides in us through purity, namely, mystical vision. It is impossible, then, for the soul to enter into the rest of the Son of God, if it has not acquired the image of the King; for neither does the assayer weigh objects without value, nor does the King put such things in his treasury. So it is with the soul. If it has not acquired the image of Jesus the Great King, the Angels will not rejoice with it. Jesus will cast it out, saying: "How did you enter here without having My image, which is love, as I have said?" It is impossible for His love to abide in us when the soul seeks God, but is divided and loves worldly things. For just as a bird cannot fly on one wing, nor when it has some burden hanging on it, so also the soul cannot make progress in God when it is tied down to some worldly matter.

Nothing worldly can separate those who love God with their whole heart from His love, as the Apostle says: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ...For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39).

2. The same Elder said: "Do not wish for anyone to ask you for advice or a word about this present age, nor should you pay any attention to one who makes such inquiries. Keep your hearing trained continuously on those who talk within you—namely, your thoughts—and be-

seech God to enable you to know which of them you should heed; for those who occupy themselves with vanities neglect to wrestle with the Devil."

D. From Abba Mark

"No man that warreth," says the Apostle, "entangleth himself with the cares of this life" (II St. Timothy 2:4). He who wishes to conquer the passions while entangled in worldly concerns is like the man who tries to quench a fire with straw. When the Devil finds a man needlessly occupied with bodily matters, he first snatches the spoils of knowledge from him. Then he cuts off his hope in God, just as one would cut off the head of a convict.

E. From St. Diadochos

A soul which has not been separated from worldly cares will neither love God genuinely, nor will it loathe the Devil as it should; for it is covered by a wearisome veil—the cares of life. Under such conditions, the mind cannot come to a deeper knowledge of itself, so that it is enabled to test its own judgments without the risk of error. It is altogether useful, then, to withdraw from the world. Only a few people are capable of recognizing all of their own faults, and in none of their cases is the mind snatched away from the recollection of God. For just as our bodily eyes, when they are healthy, are able to see everything (even the mosquitoes or gnats that fly in the air) but, when they are blurred or covered with fluid, see dimly only the large objects they may encounter, and cannot even perceive small objects by the sense of sight, so it is with the soul. If by prayer the soul diminishes the blindness that afflicts it from love for the world, and then supposes its extremely small faults to be extremely big, it unceasingly sheds tear after tear in great gratitude; for "the righteous shall give thanks unto Thy Name" (Psalm 139:14); but if the soul abides in its worldly attitude, and commits murder or something worthy of severe punishment, it lightly faces these without upset, while other faults, of a secondary kind, it considers not only unworthy of attention, but often regards certain of them as accomplishments. For this reason the wretched soul boasts about them, without feeling any remorse.

F. From St. Barsanouphios

A brother asked an Elder: "If I hear that someone is warring against demons or is in poor health, and I feel sympathy for him, tell me, Father: First, is this sympathy good, or is it from demons, who want to keep me from thinking about my own sins? And secondly, should I mention such a person in prayer, when I myself am in more danger and found in greater sins? If the person asks me about this himself, or tells me to speak to one of the Fathers, what should I do? Indeed, does offering prayer for a neighbor train one who is subject to the passions in love?"

The Elder replied: "The Fathers have instructed younger monks that no one should abandon a corpse of his own to go off and weep for another. It is a mark of those who are perfect that they sympathize with their neighbor; *it is an illusion of demons for a younger monk to sympathize with another;* for the younger monk makes foolish judgments about men and things, without infallible discernment, which is why good and advantageous things frequently appear bad and disadvantageous to him. It is beneficial for him, therefore, to ignore all those outside the Monastery; and even if he happens to remember that one of them is sick or suffers from some affliction, or hears about him from others, let him say: 'May God have mercy on both him and me.' Let a young monk not tell any of the Elders to pray for someone; for this involves the exercise of his own judgment.

"If he wishes, let him simply mention to the Elder that such-and-such a person is afflicted, and when he hears this, the Elder will of course pray in the spirit for the sick person. If someone should ask you to speak about him to an Elder, say the words you were commanded to say. And when you pray, say: 'Lord forgive us,' or 'Protect us in this circumstance.' Sympathy for others on account of your love of God is not yet in your domain, if you are a neophyte. When a thought about someone concerns you, then ask and learn what your duty and obligation are."

G. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother said to Abba Kronios: "Tell me, Father, how shall I be saved?" The Elder answered: "When Elissaios went to the Shumanite [Shunammite—*Trans.*] woman, he found that she was distracted by no one, and for this reason, at the appearance of Elissaios, she conceived and bore a child." The brother said: "What does this mean?" The Elder replied: "If the soul is vigilant and withdraws itself from distraction and abandons its volitions, then the Spirit of God comes to it; thereafter, it is

able to bear lofty spiritual thoughts, whereas before it was barren."*

2. Once the ruler of the country wanted to see Abba Poimen, but the Elder declined. In order to compel Poimen to meet him, the ruler arrested his sister's son as a criminal and threw him into jail, saying: "If the Elder comes and intercedes for him, I shall release him." So his sister went weeping to his door. The Elder gave her absolutely no response. She railed at him: "You have a heart of bronze—have pity on me, for he is my only son." The Elder then sent someone to tell her: "Poimen never had any children." So the woman departed without achieving anything. When the ruler heard this, he sent an emissary to the Elder with this message: "Order me even with a single word, and I shall release him." The Elder responded as follows: "Examine his case in accordance with the laws. If he deserves death, let him die; if not, do as you wish."

H. From St. Ephraim

1. A monk who is entangled in the affairs of life and directs his thought towards worldly matters *is like a man who hacks himself to pieces.*

2. A monk who seeks after the inheritance of his parents according to the flesh, after he has renounced the world and become a monk, will fall to temptations; he who seeks out the Lord will be saved. Do not say: "If I grow old, how shall I sustain myself?" Here, we are not permitted to worry about tomorrow, and yet you are already worrying about your old age? Let us seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto us [*cf.* St. Matthew 6:25-34]. For He Who promised this does not lie. If we do not seek these things first, it will be evident that we are not struggling for them. Cast your care upon the Lord, and He will nourish you (Psalm 54:23). If the Lord grants you success in some work of your hands, take heed therein, for you are going to give account of it to Him Who helped you.

I. From Abba Barsanouphios

A brother who was living the Hesychastic life in a cœnobitic monastery asked an Elder: "A widow who is suffering injustice sent someone to me, begging that I write to the *Domestikos*** to help her. Now, I have two thoughts on the matter. One says to me: 'You came here to die

to the world; if you write to him, you are transgressing the commandment of mortification to the world.' The other suggests to me: 'If you do not write to him, you are transgressing the commandment that bids you to help those in need.' Tell me, Father, what should I do?" The Elder responded: "If you were a corpse and a widow suffering injustice came here, would you be able to help her? Obviously, not in the least. Besides, if you help her, another will come along asking for help in something, and thus you transgress the commandment of mortification. A dead man gives no thought to such things. Even if others should grumble at you, this will not cause you any harm."

* This Shumanite was an Israelite woman who showed hospitality to the Prophet Elissaios and graciously served him. In return, Elissaios blessed her and, though she was barren and her husband more aged than she, she conceived and bore a son (IV Kings 4:14-17).

** During the Byzantine period, the title *"Domestikos"* was chiefly applied to the Emperor's bodyguard. Subsequently, it was a rank in the court or army and, later on, the title of an ecclesiastical office.

Hypothesis XXV

Concerning the fact that evil is easy, and that there are many who choose this, especially in our day; that virtue is demanding, and that there are few who pursue it; and that we must emulate the latter and pay no heed to the majority.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. One of the brethren once came to Abba Theodore of Pherme and said to him: "Such and such a brother returned to the world." The Elder replied: "Are you surprised at this? Do not be surprised, but be more amazed if you hear that someone was able to escape from the mouth of the Enemy."

2. An Elder said: "It is better to live with three men who fear the Lord than with ten thousand who do not have fear of God. For in the last days, among the hundreds in the cœnobitic monasteries, very few will be saved; for all will turn into devotees of the refectory, and to gluttony, love of power, and avarice. Many are called, but few are chosen" (St. Matthew 22:14).

3. The same Elder said: "If you find yourself in a place and come across men having but little material relief, pay no heed to them; but if you see another man, so poor that he has not even bread, look after him, and then you will find rest of soul."

4. Abba Poimen besought Abba Makarios with many tears: "Tell me, how am I to be saved?" The Elder replied to him: "What you are seeking has now departed from monastics."

5. Abba John recounted what one of the Elders had seen in an ecstatic vision: "Behold, three monks were standing on the opposite shore of the sea. There came to them a voice from the other side, which said: *'Take up flaming wings and come to me.'* Two of them took up flaming wings and flew to the other side; the other stayed and shed many tears, and cried aloud. He eventually took up, not fiery wings, but weak and

powerless ones. He toiled, sinking and rising again, finally, after much toil, reaching the other side. So it is with this generation: Although it takes up wings, they are not flaming, but utterly weak and powerless."

6. The Holy Fathers prophesied about the last generation, saying to each other in wonderment: "What have we achieved?" One of them, Abba Ischyrion, a great Elder, replied: "We have fulfilled the commandments of God." The others said: "What about those who will come after us, what will they do?" The Elder answered: "They will accomplish half of our work." And again the Fathers asked: "What about those who come after them?" Abba Ischyrion replied: "The men of that generation will accomplish no work at all; temptation will come upon them. But those who are found worthy in that epoch will be *greater* than we and our Fathers."

B. From St. Ephraim

My beloved, when you see those who are advanced in the monastic life being negligent, watch out and fortify yourself, lest in emulating them you traverse the same path yourself and inherit eternal punishment with them. Or again, do not make a show of your own temperance and vaunt yourself against them, thereby falling into haughtiness; if you do, you will be in the Enemy's hands. But attend to yourself and guard yourself intently; for we are not justified or condemned by the deeds of others. Rather, when we are brought before the Judge naked and with our necks bowed, each will give an account of himself and bear his own burden. This is why it is always good to attend to yourself and to imitate those who live their lives according to God, looking to them and becoming like them.

Do not vie with those who neglect their own salvation and who acquire the monastic habit for mere external appearance, so as not to resemble a soldier taken over by the Enemy, who, bearing the King's emblem, nonetheless serves the King's enemies. For He does not lie Who says: "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (St. John 8:34). For the monastic habit is like the leaves of a tree, while deeds are the tree's fruits. Do not concern yourself, then, with outer appearance or seek to emulate such men, justifying yourself by saying, "You are no worse than others who fall into passions." Rather, bring to mind the saying, that in a great mansion there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also wooden and earthenware ones; some are valuable, others are

not. If, then, you disobey the Lord by accomplishing the works of sin, you are a worthless vessel. But if you do the works of the Lord, you will be a chosen vessel, prized, sanctified and useful to the Master, ready for every good deed.

Cherish good company but keep away from bad company, since no sorcerer, brigand, or grave-robber was ever born such, but learned these things from men whose minds were corrupted by Satan. For God made all things exceedingly good. Do not take delight in baths, drinking, gatherings in the marketplace, and luxury, lest you fall into fatal dangers. Always keep in mind the affliction of sinners, lest you should one day be reckoned among them. Have you never entered a home where people were in mourning and, after seeing the lamentation and the wailing, hastened to depart from that house? Hence it is that we make conjectures about eternal realities on the basis of temporal phenomena. For the Old Testament says: "Give an opportunity to a wise man, and he will become wiser" (Proverbs 9:9). Be guileless in accepting the commandments of God, but crafty in repelling the wiles of the Devil and in cutting off harmful relationships, so that your inner man may be at peace.

Do not spend time with actors and comedians, so as not to corrupt your thoughts; for their words cause more damage to their audience than the venom of asps.* They cause old men to behave like children and lead the young into works of iniquity. If you are in a monastery and see certain brethren walking about in a disorderly manner and saying things that are not pleasing to God, *pay no attention to them* or to their words, but keep God before your eyes, as it is written: "I beheld the Lord always before me, because He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken" (Psalm 15:8). Do not let the Devil bring temptation to your mind: "If these Elders have been in the monastery and the ascetic life for a long time, what about me, who am their junior? What am I to do?" But hear the Lord, Who says: "Many are called, but few are chosen" (St. Matthew 22:14). And again: "...Are there few that be saved?" (St. Luke 13:23).

Become one of the elect and the few, then, not one of the many and the perishing. For those who do evil, whether they are in a cœnobitic monastery or in any place whatsoever, are sons of the Evil One, who resemble the tares in the midst of the wheat (St. Matthew 13:25-30). Be wheat, then, so that you may be gathered into the barns of the Lord and not burned like darnel in the unquenchable fire. Consider that the righteous Lot dwelled in Sodom, but was not carried away with its hedo-

nism and wantonness. For this reason, he was saved, as it is written: "For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds" (II St. Peter 2:8). He adds: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (II St. Peter 2:9). And so on.

Although he lived with such men, Lot did not perish with them. Gehazi served the Prophet Elissaios and yet sinned (IV Kings 5:20-27). Likewise, Samuel stayed with Eli and associated with his sons; and when they perished (I Kings 4:1-22), he was saved because he loved the Lord in truth and did not envy the ways of the godless. Judas followed the Lord together with the Disciples, and yet he gave Him over to the hands of the transgressors.

So it is that each of us must always attend to himself. If we dwell with righteous men, looking to them, we shall live righteously ourselves, having examples of virtue close to us; but if we dwell with sinners, let us endeavor not only not to emulate their deeds, but rather to provide them with opportunities for salvation through our own good conduct. If anyone says: "I am weak and negligent and am easily led into evil deeds by heedless men," let him turn his attention to the Divine Scriptures and imitate the Holy Fathers in their way of life; he will then meet with approval from God and men. Let him visit with men who fear the Lord and heal souls, and let him accept with longing everything they say; let him show that he can put their words into practice, and in a short time he will bear fruit. For the Scripture says: "Ask thy father and he will shew thee; thine elders, and they will tell thee" (Deuteronomy 32:7).

We must realize that he who lives in a cœnobitic monastery, disregarding his own salvation and doing deeds antithetical to it, will court very severe punishment, not only for himself, but also for the souls of those who are destroyed through him, his having been a model of sloth and evil. Again, however, he who cultivates the virtues and thinks of his own salvation will be granted great glory in Heaven, having made himself a model of virtuous life for his brethren and, through his own zeal, having aroused the eagerness of the more negligent to carry out the commandments. For just as he who has struggled first in the line of battle, and has broken through the enemy's phalanx, is honored above the rest, so he who is vigilant in doing the work of the Lord, and provides for the many an example of service, will receive greater glory from God.

C. From Antiochos

Just as the wasp eats the products of the labor of bees, so also a slothful brother impairs the virtuous existence of a community; and just as a cowardly soldier paralyzes the hands of his fellow-warriors, so also a negligent monk weakens the eagerness of his brethren; for this reason God will punish him very severely. It is therefore better, brethren, to dwell with a few people who are pleasing to God than with those many men who despise the commandments of the Lord. For where there is fear of the Lord, there is also love and unanimity, and God dwells in the midst of such people. But where men do not fear God, there is strife and envy; and where there is envy, or jealousy, there the Evil One is pleased.

It is preferable, then, to live with a few good men than with a multitude of unprofitable men, just as the Divine Scriptures have instructed us. For the author of the Proverbs says: "Do not desire a multitude of unprofitable men, if the fear of the Lord is not with them." Indeed, one righteous man is better than a thousand sinners; "for in the assembly of sinners fire will be kindled" (Ecclesiasticus 16:6 [Sophia Sirach, or the Wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach]). Another passage says: "Do not desire an unprofitable multitude, and if they increase, do not rejoice over them, if the fear of the Lord is not with them; do not entrust yourself to their life, for you will groan with untimely grief. One righteous man who does the Will of God is better than having impious children; for from one wise man a city will be replenished" (Ecclesiasticus 16:1-4).

D. From Abba Mark

When you see two evil men who have love for each other, know that the one coöperates with the other to accomplish their evil will. A haughty man and a vainglorious man will gladly enter into an alliance with each other; for the former praises the vainglorious one, as he slavishly cringes before him, while the latter exalts the haughty one, as he continually praises him. Keep yourself far away from them, so that you may not suffer the harm that comes therefrom.

E. From the *Gerontikon*

A brother asked an Elder: "If I see some of my companions returning to the world, how can I not be scandalized?" The Elder replied: "You should think of dogs hunting hares. When one of the dogs sees a hare,

he pursues it, overcoming every obstacle to reach it, while the other dogs, not seeing the hare, but only the dog pursuing it, run with the dog up to a certain point; but then, subsequently, they turn back. The dog who sees the hare and chases after it does not cease from his course, until he indeed reaches the hare, paying no attention to the dogs that have turned back, giving no thought to the cliffs, the woods, or the goads, and being in no way hindered by them. He clings continually to the goal of the hunt and looks only to the hare he is chasing. In a similar way, he who seeks after our Master Jesus, and hastens to catch up with Him, cleaves unceasingly to the Cross, overlooks everything, and surmounts all the stumbling blocks that he encounters, until he reaches the Crucified One and lays hold of Him Who lives and Who abides.

F. From St. Ephraim

The enemy hastens to arm the more negligent brothers against the more sober ones. But the more sober, if they are diligent, find a source of spiritual labor in the more negligent, enduring their weaknesses for the Lord's sake. He who acts mercifully to his neighbor will find mercy with the Lord. Judgment is merciless for him who has not acted mercifully. Do not help your brother to commit sin; hasten, if you can, to rescue him from it, so that your soul may live in the Lord. Let the fear of God be ever before your eyes, and sin will have no control over you.

* The asp is a species of very poisonous snake, the bite of which is fatal.

Hypothesis XXVI

Those coming to the monastic life are received with much testing; those admitted after scrutiny are for the most part reliable; what tasks are entrusted to them.

A. From the Life of St. Pachomios

When St. Pachomios was still a young man and his heart burned with love for God, he was eager to become a monk. On being informed about a certain hermit named Palamon, who lived alone, he went to him, wishing to remain with him. After reaching his cell, which was close to the desert, he began to knock on the door. Palamon opened it a little and said to him: "What do you want and for whom are you looking?" (for the Elder was rather strict as a result of living alone for a long time). Pachomios replied to him: "God sent me to you to make me a monk." The Elder told him: "You cannot become a monk, for the work of a monk is no small matter. This is why many who have come here have grown slack and have not endured." Pachomios said to him: "The intentions of men are not all the same. Receive me, and time will inform you." The Elder repeated to him: "I told you that you cannot become a monk. Go elsewhere and live the ascetic life for a period of time. If you subsequently return, then I shall receive you. I pass my life here in harsh asceticism, and by the grace of God I partake of nothing other than bread and salt. I abstain completely from oil and wine. I keep vigil half the night, in prayer and study of the words of God; there are times when I stay up the whole night."

After hearing this, Pachomios was in awe at the strictness of the Elder's words. By Divine Grace he proposed in his soul to endure every toil bravely, and said to the Elder: "I trust in the Lord, that He will provide me with such strength and patience that I shall be deemed worthy of attaining perfection in this place, through your holy prayers." St. Palamon then understood with the clairvoyant eyes of his soul Pachomios' faith and eagerness for salvation. He opened the door and admitted him, clothing him with the monastic *schema*. They both lived the ascetic life in the same place and occupied themselves in prayer. Their work consisted of braiding ropes and weaving sacks. They toiled and la-

bored, as the Apostle says, not for their own respite, nor for the sake of collecting money, but to support the poor [*cf.* Ephesians 4:28]. When Palamon saw Pachomios' obedience in all matters, and his progress in asceticism, he rejoiced greatly and glorified God.

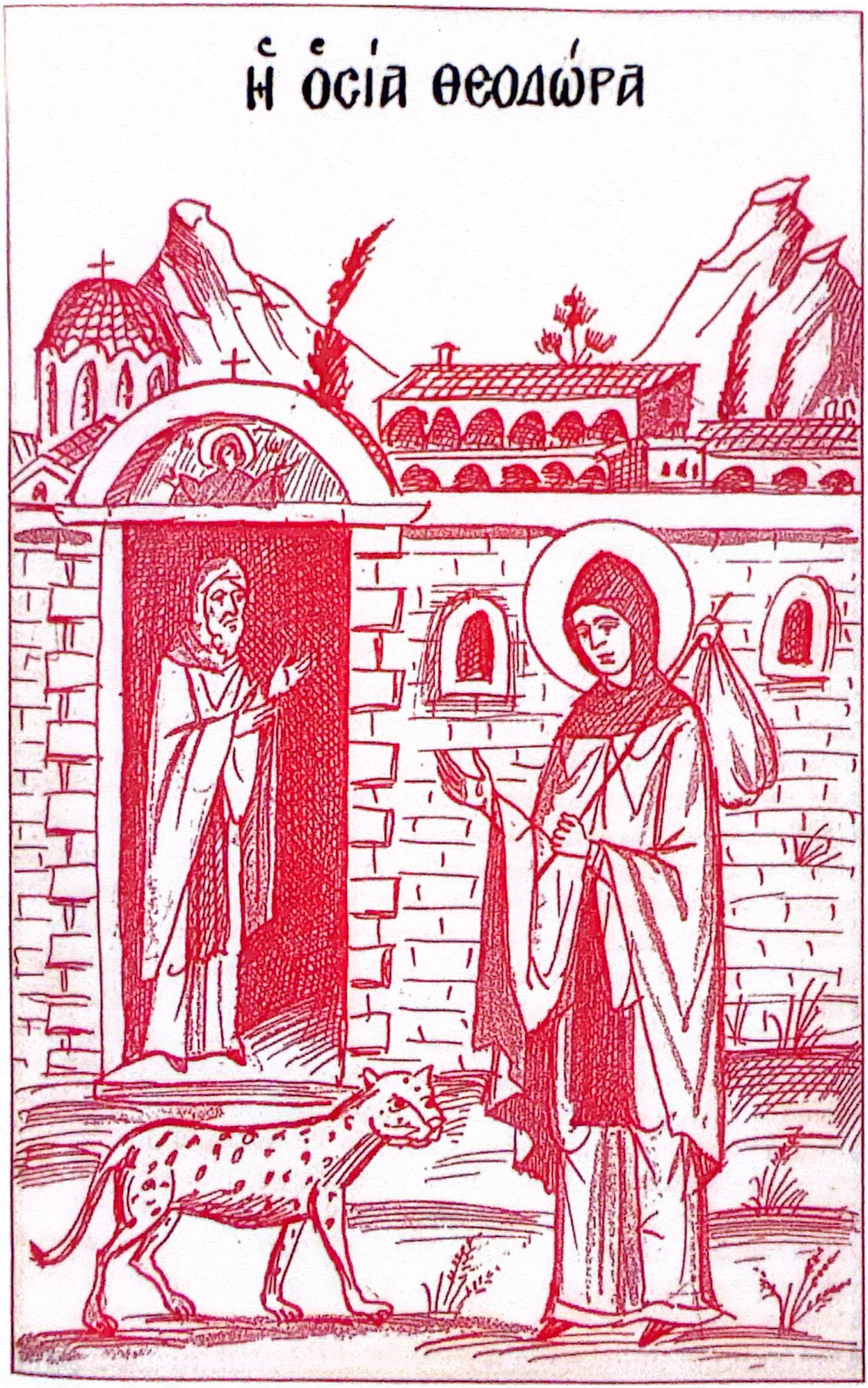
B. From the Same Life

St. Pachomios used to pray continuously that God's Will might be done in him. After a period of time, while he was keeping vigil and praying for this, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him and said: "God's Will is for you to serve Him and reconcile the human race to God." After saying this three times, he departed from Pachomios. He therefore gave thanks to God, and when he had been assured once again that the vision was from God, he began to receive those who came in repentance before God and to give them the monastic *schema*, after much scrutiny, dissuading them from the cares of this life and advancing them gradually in asceticism.

C. From the Life of St. Theodora

Theodora, the most blessed of women, decided to renounce the world and worldly cares and to trip up the deceiver (the Devil) with very clever devices. She put on men's clothing, so as to escape being detected by her husband, who would surely have diligently searched for her, and went to a men's monastery eighteen *semeia* away from Alexandria. When she reached the gateway of the monastery, she asked to be admitted and to be made a monastic. Although the monks thought she was a man and not a woman, they refused to do so at first, unless she remained in the open air all night and, in this way, giving the brothers a means of testing her perseverance. Theodora not only agreed to their suggestion gladly, but also undertook to fulfill it, although she knew full well that she was likely to be attacked by wild beasts at night, since the place was a desert and quite wild. She passed the night in this way, waiting outside the gateway. For this reason, He Who of old tamed the savagery of the lions for Daniel's sake preserved the Saint untouched by the beasts, foreseeing to what heights of virtue she would swiftly rise. When the monks saw her feat, they decided that it was pleasing to God for her to remain with them.

After gladly admitting Theodora, the Abbot took her aside and asked her carefully who she was and why she had come to the monastery.



St. Theodora

"Was it perhaps," he asked, "because you were burdened by debts, or were convicted of murdering someone, or lacked the means to feed your children, that you chose to cast off worldly garb?" Theodora replied, "Not for any of these reasons, Father, but only in order to have respite from the tumult of the world and to mourn deeply for my own sins." "What is your name?" asked the Abbot. "My name is 'Theodore,'" said the brave woman. The Abbot said: "Do not suppose, Brother Theodore, that your life here will be without toils. But if you wish to submit to the yoke of obedience, you should know that you will serve all the needs of the brothers, not only those within the monastery, such as taking care of the plants and vegetables and carrying water and watering the garden regularly, but also performing tasks outside the monastery. When it becomes necessary for you to depart for the city, do not ask to be excused. Let not these tasks will be a pretext for you to avoid ascetic labors; on the contrary, it is all the more necessary for you to attend unceasingly to fasting and prayer and to chant Vespers and Matins every day, as is our custom. In addition, you must not omit any of the Hours during the day. You must also toil on bended knee and in this way wear out your body, so as to face the attacks of the demons who war against us on Earth."

When the Blessed Theodora heard these instructions, reckoning them a delight for her soul, she promised to carry them out with great eagerness. In this way, she joined the ranks of that noble company of monastics. Since she had renounced all carnal inclinations, her promises to God were sure to be fulfilled. She immediately gave herself to toils without hesitation and without offering excuses for avoiding the service expected of her. She busied herself for eight years in watering the plants and the vegetables, which provided for the needs of those in the monastery, and devoted herself every day to grinding corn, kneading dough, and preparing loaves of bread, without lagging behind. She also boiled vegetables, with which those who were earnest about mortifying carnal impulses sustained themselves. She was never absent from the services celebrated in the Church, but even more in this respect did she manifest her love for God in her soul.

Although she clung to this discipline and chose an exceedingly laborious way of life, the thought of her previous sins did not allow her to be entirely at peace. After nightfall, when she ought to have slept and rested a little from these daylong duties of hers, she would smite her breast and arouse her soul to tears, saying: "Forgive me my sin, O Lord, which has destroyed the comeliness of my chastity." Regularly, she pur-

chased oil, corn, and other necessities for the monastery, conveying them there on camels. In short, there was no laborious duty which Theodora did not prove more eager than the other monastics to carry out.

D. From the Life of St. Melania the Roman

St. Melania established a convent of more than ninety virgins in Jerusalem, near the Mount of Olives, and appointed for them an Abbess who surpassed the others in teaching and in her conduct. In her service to them, she was like a servant; but in her love for them, she was like a mother, for with the utmost humility she would offer them advice that was indispensable for their salvation. She used to tell them, with regard to obedience and submission to authorities, that even in worldly affairs what above all else maintains order is for a king to be king and a subject a subject. If one takes this away, he will destroy order and will have confused both things as well as persons. She was wont to cite the following example:

Someone once approached a great Elder, eager to be his disciple. Indicating from the very beginning what kind of disciple he ought to be, the Elder ordered the man to strike and kick with all his might a statue that was standing close by. When the young man obeyed, the Elder asked him whether the statue reacted or expressed displeasure while it was being struck and kicked. The young man replied that no such thing had happened, and the Elder once more ordered him to strike it, and to add insults to the blows. He did so three times, and the statue remained just a lifeless and mute statue. The Elder then told the young man: "If you can endure the same abuse without answering back, just like this statue, which withstood all the offensive treatment you inflicted on it, proceed in confidence and take advantage of the training you will receive from us; if not, do not undertake to spend your life with us."

E. From Palladios

Abba Kronios, a disciple of St. Anthony the Great, recounted to me a story about St. Paul the Simple, who acquired that epithet by virtue of his exceedingly guileless and simple character: "A man called Paul, a countryman and farmer, was married to a beautiful but malicious woman. She was engaged in adultery, but for a long time he did not realize this, because he was pure in character and never entertained evil suspicions. One time, when he had returned from the fields, Paul sud-

denly entered his house and caught her red-handed in the act of adultery. He smiled modestly and said to the adulterers: 'Good, good; it is truly of no concern to me. By Jesus, I am no longer going to live with her. Go on, have her and her children. I am going to become a monk.' Without saying anything to anyone, he ran past the eight stops;* he finally reached the Blessed Anthony and knocked on his door.

"The great Father came out and asked him what he wanted. Paul said to him: 'I want to become a monk.' Anthony replied to him: 'You are an old man of sixty years, so you cannot become a monk. Go off to a village and work. Live a productive life and give thanks to God, for you will not be able to endure the hardships of the desert.' The elderly Paul answered: 'I will do whatever you teach me.' Anthony replied: 'I have told you that you are an old man and cannot be a monk. If, however, you insist on being a monk, go and enter a monastery with many brothers, who can put up with your weakness. I live here on my own, eating every five days; I remain hungry, without eating to satiety.' With words like these, the Elder tried to scare Paul away. But when Paul failed to leave, Anthony entered his cave and shut the door, not coming out for three days, on account of him. Paul remained sitting by the door and waited.

"On the fourth day, compelled by some need, Anthony opened the door and came out. When he saw Paul, he said: 'Get away from here, old man! Why are you bothering me? You cannot stay here.' Paul replied to him: 'It is impossible for me to go away or to die anywhere else but here.' Anthony scrutinized him, and when he saw that he was carrying no provisions—bread, water, or anything else—and that it was now the fourth day that he had persisted in not eating, fearing lest Paul should perish and he should stain his own soul for having failed to show any sympathy for the old man, he took him in. After moistening some palm-leaves, the Elder told him: 'Take these and plait a rope, as you see me doing.'

"The old man plaited fifteen fathoms of rope with much toil, until the ninth hour. But when Anthony saw the results of his plaiting, he was displeased. He approached Paul and said: 'You are bad at plaiting; undo it and plait it again.' (He imposed this on Paul, although he had been fasting already for four days, as I said, and was an old man, in order to test his perseverance.) Paul undid the rope and plaited it again with great difficulty, because the leaves had shriveled up after the first plaiting. When Anthony saw that the old man did not grumble or complain, and did not become in the least bit annoyed or frown at all, he was

amazed at him. After sunset he said to Paul: 'Papa,** do you wish that we eat a morsel of bread?' Paul replied, 'As you see fit, Abba.' This made Anthony even more sympathetic—that he did not rush forward immediately at the announcement of food, but yielded to the Elder's authority. He told Paul to set the table. He obeyed. Anthony then brought four rusks, weighing about thirty grams each,*** and he moistened one for himself, but three for Paul. After this, he recited a Psalm, which was chanted. When he had chanted it twelve times, he prayed twelve times, so as to test Paul in this way, also. Paul eagerly prayed with him, and after praying they sat down to eat, since it was deep into the evening.

"After eating one rusk, Anthony did not touch another. The old man, eating at a more leisurely pace, still had a bit of the rusk which he had started. Anthony waited for him to finish. When he had finished, he said to him: 'Eat another rusk, Papa.' Paul replied to him: 'If you eat, so do I; if you do not eat, neither do I.' Anthony said: 'It is enough for me, for I am a monk.' Paul said, 'It is enough for me, too, for I also wish to become a monk.' They got up from the table, and Anthony said twelve prayers and twelve Psalms; Paul prayed with him. Then they slept for a little while, until midnight. They awoke at midnight and began to chant until daybreak. When Anthony saw the old man following him eagerly in everything, he said to him: 'Look, brother, if you can live like this day after day, you can stay with me.' Paul answered: 'I do not know whether you have anything more to show me, since I can easily do these things that I see you doing.' When St. Anthony the Great was assured that Paul had a soul that was quite perfect in every respect, and that was unpretentious and guileless, he set up a cell for him—after a few months and with the help of God's Grace—about three or four *semeia* away from his own cell, saying to him: 'Behold, by the power of God you have become a monk. From now on, remain by yourself, so that you may experience the testing of the demons.' After living on his own for a year, the simple Paul was granted the gift of chasing away demons and diseases of all kinds. He had succeeded in attaining the heights of ascetic virtue.

"One day, a young man, who had a powerful demon (a demonic commander) inside him, was brought to St. Anthony the Great. This demon was blaspheming even against Heaven itself. Anthony took a look at the youth and said to those who had brought him: 'This is not a task for me, for I have not been granted the gift of casting out this rank of demon. Paul the Simple has this gift.' St. Anthony went with them to Paul and said to him: 'Abba Paul, cast out the demon from this man, so

that he may return to his home in good health and glorify the Lord.' Paul asked him: 'Why do you not do it?' Anthony replied: 'I do not have the time; I have other work to do.' St. Anthony the Great left the boy behind, there, and returned to his own cell.

"Paul stood up and prayed, and after summoning the demonized youth, said: 'Abba Anthony says you must come forth from this young man, so that he may glorify the Lord.' The demon cried out with blasphemy: 'I am not coming out, you foolish old glutton.' Paul took his sheepskin cloak and smote the boy on the back, saying: 'Come out, as Abba Anthony said.' The demon began to rail at Anthony and Paul even more violently: 'You greedy, dull-witted dotards, insatiable as you are, what do you have to do with us? Why do you tyrannize us?' Finally Paul asked: 'Are you not coming out? See, I am going to tell Christ, and woe betide what He has in store for you.' The savage demon blasphemed even the Lord, crying: 'I will not come out.'

"Enraged at the demon for this, the simple Paul came out of his cell, although it was high noon (the heat in Egypt, especially in these regions, is akin perhaps to the furnace in Babylon). Standing like a pillar on a rock, he prayed in this way: 'Do Thou behold, O Jesus Christ, Who wast crucified under Pontius Pilate, that I am not going to descend from this rock, nor will I eat or drink, until I die, unless Thou hearest me now and castest out the demon from this man and makest him free from this unclean spirit.'

"While he was still uttering these words, the demon cried out through the man, in front of the cell: 'I am going, I am going. I am coming out by force and I am being driven out by tyranny. I am withdrawing from the man. I am no longer going to approach him. Paul's humility and simplicity are driving me out, and I do not know where I will go.' The unclean spirit immediately came forth and was transformed into a huge snake, nearly seventy cubits long. It dragged itself off in the direction of the Red Sea."

This was the work of the simple and humble Paul, through whom God showed what degree of honor and glory He grants to unpretentious and humble people; for through his simplicity and modesty, Paul quickly put to flight the demon which even St. Anthony the Great could not expel. He did this after only a year of asceticism, so that thus the saying of the Holy Spirit might be fulfilled: "...To whom will I have respect," says the Lord, "but to the humble and meek, and the man that trembleth at My words?" (Isaiah 66:2). It is customary for the more lowly of the evil spirits to be cast out in faith by men advanced in virtue,

while those demons higher up are put to flight by humbler men.

F. From Palladios

St. Pachomios used to pray constantly that God's Will be done in him. After some time, when he was keeping vigil and praying for this, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him and said: "God's Will is for you to serve Him and reconcile the human race to God. From now on welcome to yourself those who approach God in repentance, and advise them according to the rule that I shall give you." When he had said this, he handed Pachomios a bronze tablet on which the following words had been inscribed:

"You will allow each monk to eat and drink according to his strength. Hinder no one either from fasting or from eating. Entrust heavy tasks to those who are stronger and who eat, but light tasks to those who are more ascetic and weaker. Make various cells in the same monastery, and let no more than three monks stay in each cell. Let all the brethren eat in the same refectory. Let them not sleep with their bodies stretched out, but let them construct chairs that recline backwards and put bedding on them. This is how they should sleep.

"If a guest comes from another monastery that has a different rule, let him not eat or drink with them or go inside the monastery, unless he has been found on the road. But as for him who comes to stay permanently, do not accept him into monastic struggle for a period of three years. Let him enter the stadium after three years, when he has performed more laborious tasks. Let them wear cotton cowls, like those of children, and let red Crosses be sewn on them. Let the monks cover their heads with these cowls when they eat, lest one brother should see another chewing. Let them not talk while they eat, and let them not direct their eyes anywhere else than on the table and the platters." The Angel prescribed that they should say twelve prayers throughout the day and twelve in the evening, twelve at the night office, and three at the ninth hour, and should chant a Psalm with each prayer.

When the great Pachomios objected to the Angel that these were only a few prayers, the Angel said to him: "I have prescribed these prayers so that even the little ones should complete them and not get upset. Those who are perfect have no need of legislation. In that they are by themselves in their cells, they have dedicated their entire lives to attaining the vision [*theoria—Trans.*] of God. I have laid down these requirements for those who do not yet have a quickened mind, so that

even if they attend services as disobedient servants, they might there, nonetheless, with fear of the Master, make clearly manifest their disposition."

After giving these instructions and fulfilling his ministry, the Angel departed. There are seven monasteries that maintain this form of monastic life, numbering seven thousand monks, engaged in every form of handicraft. From the fruits of their work, these monks administer themselves and a women's monastery beyond the Nile, in which there are four thousand sisters. They often provide for the poor and the imprisoned from their excess earnings.

G. From St. Ephraim

My brother, if you wish to become a monk, first fix in your mind the thought that you have already departed from this life, and regard this world and its glory as a ruined tabernacle. For unless you prepare yourself in this way, you will be unable to live as monks do and conquer the passions and the worldly desires, which lead men into perdition. He does not lie Who says: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it" (St. Matthew 16:24-25). Know, then, that the following will befall one who dedicates himself to the Lord: temptations, afflictions, toil, torpor, nakedness, distress, humiliation, and the like. For in such circumstances, a man's patience is tested and his desire for God is made manifest. He who wholeheartedly gives himself over to the direction of his superior according to God is victorious in all these situations. For God demands from us only a perfect intention, and He Himself provides us with strength and bestows on us victory, as Scripture says: "He is the Defender of all those that hope in Him" (Psalm 17:31).

I have told you these things in advance, in case, after you enter the monastic life and encounter these difficulties, you have regrets and say: "I did not know that such things would happen to me." Behold, you have already been made aware of what you are going to encounter, so that you may strengthen your thoughts in advance. For the toil comes not in laying the foundation, but in completing the building. The higher the building becomes, the more toil it provides for the builder, until the work is finished. Hear the saving voice that says: "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the

foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish" (St. Luke 14:28-30). The warfare of soldiers is brief, but that of the monk lasts until he departs to the Lord.

For this reason you must begin your work with all seriousness, patience, and vigilance. If you attempt, my beloved, to slay a lion, be careful to hold him down firmly, lest he crush your bones like a vessel of clay; and if you throw yourself into the sea, do not be dissuaded until you emerge on dry land, lest you sink to the bottom like a stone. Today, then, when you are at the threshold of the contest, do not say, "I will endure everything," yet seek tomorrow to be excused from your tasks. For the Angels of God stand beside us invisibly and hear everything that proceeds from our lips. See, my beloved, that no one forces you, but that you join the battle voluntarily and truly, and hereafter do not deny your promises to God; for He shall "destroy all them that speak falsehood" (Psalm 5:7).

My beloved, if you make a good beginning, you will also conclude your old age in a pleasing manner; and you will be as a lamp that enlightens many on the path of the Lord. Lay a strong foundation, then, so that your work may be exalted. If you come to the monastic life from the vanity of life in the world, where you had a great reputation, keep yourself from the demon of haughtiness, lest you be dominated by him and brought down into perdition. This is no shame for you if you are in obedience in the Lord, and do with your own hands what is good; for this distress and this affliction, which you endure for the Lord's sake, will become for you a cause of eternal life. What else am I to say? For just as one who exchanges a drachma for ten thousand gold talents is benefited, such also is every difficulty of the monastic life in relation to the glory that is to be revealed to those who struggle and labor. One offers a small amount, then, and receives a large one in return.

If the Abbot hands you over to some brother to be subject to him, do not say in your mind, "I am a son of great and illustrious parents, while he is descended from obscure and disreputable beggars, or perhaps from slaves," or, "He has no knowledge of worldly wisdom, whereas I do," or, "How can I be subject to him? If I do this, it will be an affront to me." Do not entertain such thoughts, my beloved; for you have not thought prudently about this. Indeed, he who thinks thus has not yet put off the old man, which is corrupted by deceptive desires. But as for us, my beloved, since we have been handed over by God to brothers of like soul for slavery, let us endure, so that we may be granted the free-

dom of the righteous, taking into account the Master of all, Who, though rich, became poor for our sake, so that by His poverty we might become rich [*cf.* II Corinthians 8:9]. He was called a Samaritan and a demoniac, so that He might correct our thoughtlessness. Place your neck under His good yoke, then, without shame, that you might find rest for your soul. Hear a parable about this:

Two athletes went simultaneously to contend against their opponents; one of these was clad in a shining garment, and the other in a poor one. They both took off what they were wearing and entered the stadium naked. Now, do you imagine that the one who took off the bright garment brought it out again at the time of the contest, thinking that it might help him against his adversary? Or did he not, rather, dismiss it as something that contributed nothing to the contest, displaying his courage and skill in vigor against his opponent? So it is with you. Do not think about what you have left behind; for each man has let go of what he had and put off the old man, so that he might put on the new. But lay hold of humility, knowing that you entered the contest naked, like the other athletes, and that it is written: "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (St. Luke 16:15). Do not be puffed up by worldly wisdom, for the wisdom of the world, says the Apostle, is foolishness with God (I Corinthians 3:19); and again: "If any man among you wisheth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise" (I Corinthians 3:18).

So forget your former way of life, in order that you might boldly ask God to forgive your previous sins. After you have cast off your old ways and humbled your thoughts, gather unfailing wealth through serving your brothers and bearing spiritual fruits. If you are removing dirt from the inner courts of the monastery, hasten to remove worldly desires from the inner man. If you are cleaning the ashes from the kitchen, remember the Prophet, who says: "For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping" (Psalm 101:10).

When you see perishable fire, think of the eternal flame, which is going to consume sinners, and weep for the sins you have committed. Pursue whatever you pursue with humility and good intention, and you will reap the greatest benefit and draw the Grace of God to yourself. "For the Lord," says Solomon, "resisteth the proud but giveth Grace to the humble" (Proverbs 3:34). If you labor a great deal, keep in mind those who are tormented in exile, in mines, and in bitter slavery, and subject yourself in the Lord to the Abbot; for the slavery which you endure is not for men, but for the Lord. Who, having suffered dishonor or

having toiled for the sake of an earthly king, does not consider insult rather as honor and toil as respite? If we do not likewise choose to submit to dishonor and toil for the Lord, why did we leave the world?

My beloved, who is worthy and blessed to suffer for Him? If you stand firm for His sake, know that you offer a small amount and receive a large amount in return. We need patience, therefore, so that by doing God's Will we may attain to what He promised; for He said: "He that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved" (St. Matthew 24:13).

If those who have abandoned brilliant prospects in the world must become humble, how much more must those who come from a pitiful and toilsome life to the monastic life abase themselves and never think proud thoughts; even if they are honored above the rest, they must display meekness and humility, recalling and thinking continuously of the benefits of the Lord (from what kind of affliction in this life He rescued them), lest distracted in their minds and forgetting their former dishonor, they become puffed up and hear, as those ungrateful to their Benefactor, what is said in the Psalm: "But man, being in honor, understood not; he is compared to the senseless cattle, and is become like unto them" (Psalm 48:21).

Therefore, my beloved, let us serve the Lord in great humility all our days, for He raises the beggar from the ground and lifts the hungry from the dung heap, so that after the end of this life He may grant us the glory of the meek and the humble; for it is written: "The Lord...recompenseth them that deal exceeding proudly" (Psalm 30:24).

H. From St. John Cassian

In all of the cœnobitic monasteries in Egypt and throughout the East, these canonical prescriptions are observed: One who comes to the *cœnobion* wishing to become a monk will not be received inside the monastery until he has shown that he has a real desire for God and a measure of humility and long-suffering, by exercising the greatest possible patience. When he has been tested in these ways, the aspiring monk is accepted among the brothers and is instructed not to hold onto any of his property. In this way, every aspirant is stripped of his former possessions, so that he is not permitted hereafter to wear even the clothing which he was wearing when he came to the monastery. When all the brothers are assembled in the Church, and he has been led into their midst, *he removes his worldly garments* and is clothed by the Abbot, instead, with monastic vesture, so that he might know, through this act,

that he has been stripped of all worldly things, of arrogance, and of vanity, and has put on the poverty of Christ; that without any shame he has thereby placed himself among the monastics, putting himself on the same level as the body of the brotherhood.

The *Oikonomos* (Steward) of the monastery takes the clothes which the candidate has removed and keeps them for some time in a separate place, until he demonstrates his progress, conduct, and patience amidst various temptations. If the brothers find him capable of persevering in these circumstances, and persisting in the same serious and ardent fervor with which he began, then they enroll him officially in the brotherhood. But if they learn that he suffers from the flaw of grumbling, or has sinned by showing disobedience in any way whatever, they remove from him the monastic garb that he put on and clothe him once more in his worldly garments, expelling him from the *cœnobion*. This strictness is not meant to drive off from the monastery those who just occasionally think of leaving, but only a person who persistently fails, in every instance, to maintain his monastic profession; he is placed again in worldly clothing, and is thus released from the monastery.

When a candidate has been accepted, having been tested by this strictness that we mentioned above, and has been found blameless, he is not allowed to mingle immediately with the company of the brothers, but is handed over to the monk who has the obedience of looking after guests; and he is directed to provide guests with every care and service. When he has served the guests irreproachably for a whole year, having been trained thereby in humility and long-suffering, he is numbered with the company of the brothers. The task of the senior monk is to instruct the novice how to start on the road that leads to the attainment of perfect virtue. First, he teaches him to overcome his own desires, by ordering him to do the opposite of what he wants. For the Fathers say that there is *no other way* for one to curb his desires, or to conquer anger or grief, or truly to acquire humility, or simply to achieve perfection in the monastery, together with the brotherhood, *than first to deaden his own volitions through obedience.*

After advancing the novice with such rules and teachings, the Fathers follow up by instructing him not to conceal his private thoughts, but to confess them to his spiritual Father as soon as they come to him, and in no way to trust his heart to judge them, but to consider them good or bad in accordance with what his spiritual Father reveals to him through his own discernment. So strict is the obedience preserved by monks that nobody, aside from the Abbot, dares to step outside the cell

where he dwells. They are eager to fulfill the orders they receive from him, as if they received them from God.

While they are in their cells and attending with unsleeping attentiveness to their handiwork, study, and prayer, as soon as they hear someone knocking at the door of each cell, summoning them either to common prayer or to some task, they lay everything aside at once and set out to fulfill the command with all zeal, making it a point to put into practice the virtue of obedience, to which they give priority over, not only their handiwork, reading, and quietness [*hesychia—Trans.*] in their cells, but also all the other virtues; for all these occupy a second place. Aside from what we have already said, it is superfluous for us to say that none of these monks possesses anything other than a short-sleeved garment,**** a short outer garment,***** sandals,• a sheepskin cloak,•• and a rush mat,••• thinking it shameful for one of the monks to say *my* book, *my* pencil, *my* writing-tablet, or call anything else *mine*.

Each of them produces such provisions for the monastery, from the sweat of his own daily work, as are sufficient not only for its needs, but also to assist in serving guests and paupers. When working, the monks are not boastful or arrogant; nor does any of them seek any more rest from his toil and sweat than he needs; nor does he acquire material possessions of any kind, for he remains as a sojourner and a stranger to the whole world, considering himself a slave and servant of his brothers, despite his mastery of any earthly thing whatever. If anyone breaks a vessel or loses anything at all, he confesses to the Abbot the error due to his negligence, and through sincere repentance he receives forgiveness.

Anyone who is summoned to work, or to the *synaxis*, and *comes too slowly*, or replies with anger or impudence, or carries out his obediences with grumbling, or *does not display the diligence that is demanded*, or prefers reading to work and obedience, and performs the tasks assigned to him too slowly, or after the end of a service does not immediately run to his work, or *speaks to someone without a serious need*, or grasps another's hand ostentatiously, or, finally, falls into a similar sin—he has a punishment imposed on him; and when the brethren assemble in the *synaxis*, then the one who is being punished falls to the ground and asks forgiveness for his mistake.

The more serious sins into which a monk can fall are the following: contempt; prideful contradiction; leaving the monastery without the Abbot's permission; meeting with women or other people outside the *cœnobion;* anger; quarreling; hostility; remembrance of wrongs; covetousness (which is leprosy of the soul); acquisition of anything what-

ever, apart from those things that the Abbot gives; eating without a blessing, and as a result of this, theft; and all those sins related to the foregoing. All these are not corrected with the simple punishment of an *epitimia* [act of penance—*Trans.*], but with a greater and stricter punishment. And if the monk does not correct himself, he is then expelled from the monastery. A monk should, in his various duties, show humility and diligence of a kind that would not be provided even to masters by their slaves.

I. From the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*

Let those who come for the first time to the Mystery of Godliness be led by the Deacons before the Bishop or the Presbyters.•••• Let the Bishop or the Presbyters carefully examine the reason which impelled them to come to the word of the Lord; let those who brought them, in turn, verify and give personal information about them. Let their conduct and life be examined in detail, and let it be determined whether they are slaves or freemen. If any of the candidates is a slave, let his master be asked whether he can give assurance as to his character; otherwise, let him not be accepted until he has shown to the Bishop, through his manner of life, that he is worthy.

* These "stops" represent resting places or the distances between such resting places. [See Palladius, *The Lausaic History,* in *Ancient Christian Writers* (New York: Newman Press, 1964), Vol. XXXIV, pp. 186-187—*Trans.*]

** "*Pappias*" is the diminutive of the word "*pappas,*" which means "father." That is, "*pappia*"="*paterouli,*" "*pappouli.*" When the word is written with a single "p," as in "*papas,*" it refers to the Bishop of Rome, though the Patriarch of Alexandria is also called "Pope."

*** The "*oungia*" [to which the original text refers] is a measure of weight, equivalent to 10 drams or roughly 32 grams.

**** The "*kolobion*" was a short garment, with or without sleeves, worn as inner clothing.

***** The "*hemiphorion*" was a short, outer garment made of coarser fabric.

• The "*sandalia*" were shoes similar to modern sandals.

•• The "*melote*" was an outer tunic made of skin, chiefly sheepskin.

••• The "*psiathion*" was fashioned out of rushes, serving as bedding (similar to today's "mat," or "*psatha*").

•••• This is cited from the *Apostolic Constitutions,* referring to idolaters coming to Christianity; in form and substance, however, it applies also to a monk entering a *cœnobion.*

Hypothesis XXVII

Rejections of the world based on different circumstances should not be wholly turned aside; we should not immediately dismiss someone who comes to the monastic community and fervently seeks to remain with the brethren, before we have examined him in detail; rather, we should grant him some possibility of staying and test him in accordance with what we have written. After we have ascertained that he is abiding by his intention, and after testing him, we should accept him into the monastic community, unless something happens that is forbidden by the Divine laws.

A. From Palladios

Once upon a time, there was a young man called Makarios, who was almost eighteen years old. While playing with his peers, he accidentally committed murder. Out of fear, he fled to the desert. He was so overcome by fear of God and men that he remained without shelter for three whole years in the desert, without feeling any of the hardships of the desert—in that region where he was staying it almost never rained.* After his three years of testing had passed, he built a cell in this fearful desert. He lived in this cell for another twenty-five years, and was counted worthy of receiving the gift of finding happiness in his solitude and of not being at all afraid of the demons.

I stayed with him for a long time and learned his life from him, as well as the reason for his withdrawal from the world. One day, I asked him to tell me what he thought about the sin of murder, which he had committed. He replied to me: "I am so far from grieving about it that, on the contrary, I take delight in the reason for the murder, because this involuntary murder of mine became the cause of my salvation." He justified this thought of his with a testimony from Holy Scripture. He referred me to the case of Moses: if he had not fled from fear—he told me—on account of the murder of the Egyptian, and had not sought refuge in

the land of Madiam, coming as far as Mount Sinai, he would not have been deemed worthy of seeing God, of enjoying the multitude of God's gifts, and, with the illumination of the Holy Spirit, of writing the Divinely-inspired Scriptures.

From this incident it is clear that it sometimes happens that a man comes to what is good, even though he had not originally intended to do so, and yet makes great progress in it.

B. From St. Ephraim

If a brother comes to a *cœnobion* from some necessity (and not from an original desire to become a monk), let him watch himself, lest the Enemy overwhelm him with thoughts which may, at first sight, appear rational; for the Evil One will put different thoughts in his mind, saying, "You, now, why do you wish to toil for the virtues and humble yourself, since there is no recompense for you? Perhaps you did not become a monk from your own choice? If such and such had not happened to you, and you had not come to be a monk from necessity, you would never have wanted it of yourself. Give up your desire henceforth to toil in vain, since God does not owe you any favor on account of it."

The Devil inspires these and other similar thoughts in the mind of the brother, desiring to fling him into despair; and if the brother is not vigilant and does not stand up against him resolutely by pondering the beneficence of God, with the power of faith, he lets himself fall into despair, because his mind is darkened and he begins to pass his life in negligence and great indifference, without the fear of God, and in this way he ends up in complete perdition.

He must, therefore, give no credence to the Enemy, when he puts such thoughts into his mind, but should rather labor more intensely in the practice of the virtues, remembering the benefits of the Lord and remembering to say to himself: "My soul, how many were vouchsafed to attain to such a way of life through fasting and almsgiving, while, although I have passed the whole time of my life in negligence, God has yet had mercy on me, and through His goodness I have achieved a kind of life that is humble and without distractions; indeed, the Lord in His love for mankind has not regarded my many and countless sins. Let us, therefore, my soul, hasten to perform deeds worthy of repentance, lest we receive twofold punishment, on the one hand, because we have disdained the Grace of God, and, on the other hand, because we have not kept our promise."

I shall tell you a parable that relates to this, my beloved, so that you might have greater eagerness and your mind may not be hesitant.

Once upon a time, there lived in a certain country a rich man. This rich man purchased property beyond a river, going away immediately thereafter. But before he departed, he summoned his slaves to him and apportioned his property to each. He said to them: "Go, let each man receive his portion and let him work on it, until I return and see each man's work." Some of them, with a sense of gratitude and out of love for their master, did not disobey his command, but went across the river and did their work. Others, however, being disobedient and rude, answered their master insolently: "We will not obey your call, and we will not cross the river and weary ourselves by working on your property." In spite of this, the master was not angry with those slaves, but ordered the servants in his house to prepare a banquet. After he had made the disobedient slaves drunk, he commanded other of his servants to pick them up, carry them over the river, and leave each man in the portion which had been allotted to him. The servants did as they had been commanded, and carried the slaves to their portions.

After this had taken place, one of these slaves came to from his inebriation; on seeing that he was on the other side of the river, on the land that his master had given him, he was startled and said to himself: "Since my master loved me so much and was not angry with me when I disobeyed his order, but endured me with long-suffering, carried me over this great and rapid river as in a dream, without my exerting any effort, and placed me on my portion, I will henceforth weary myself in working conscientiously on his property, always keeping in mind his forbearance, his goodness, and the kindnesses he showed to me." In fact, that slave began to work so diligently, that he caught up with those who had started before him.

Later, the second slave sobered up, and as soon as he saw that he was on his master's property, across the river, he said to himself, since he was idle and wicked: "So! He carried me across this great and rapid river, as in a dream. But I will leave his land untilled and dry, and I will see what he intends to do about it." He then fell asleep again. But because he slept so much, the thorns and the weeds grew very high, completely covering him.

After a long time, the master of the slaves went to inspect each man's work. When he saw the work of those who had begun first, he blessed them. Likewise, when he came to the slave whom he himself had carried across the river, as in a dream, and saw his good work for

himself, he was delighted with him and blessed him. Then he came to the lazy slave, to see his work, but found him asleep and completely covered with thorns. He therefore called him and spoke threateningly to him: "You wicked and idle slave, why did you leave my land dry? Or perhaps you are unaware that I carried you over the river, as in a dream, and placed you in the portion of my property which I allotted to you, without bearing any grudge against you for your previous disobedience? Should you not have imitated your fellow-slave, whom I carried across the river in the same way?" The wicked slave remained speechless, finding no argument by which to justify himself. Then the master rendered justice to all of his servants, to each according to his deeds.

Learn now the meaning of the parable: The rich man is Christ; the property is faith; the drunkenness represents the different circumstances of life; the turbulent river represents the wealth and the deceptive happiness of the present life; and the eager slaves symbolize those who, on account of love for God, have renounced life in the world. That slave who came to from inebriation symbolizes the pleasure-loving man who, from some circumstance of life, comes to monastic life and does as God wills. The lazy slave symbolizes the man who became a monk from some circumstance of life and from some necessity, but immediately neglected the Grace of the Lord and his salvation.

Aside from these things, think of Saul when he took letters from the high priests and journeyed to Damascus, in order to bind those who believed in Christ. But he who went forth to persecute the Faith of Christ proved to be a herald of this Faith; for the mercies of the Lord are rich for all who call on Him in sincerity.

C. From the *Gerontikon*

A young man who wished to renounce the world fled to the desert. On the way, he saw a tower—actually, a cell which had been built as a tower. He then said to himself: "Whomsoever I find in this tower I will serve until I die." As soon as he reached it, he knocked, and an Elder came to the entrance. "What do you want?" the Elder asked him. "Out of a vow, I have come to be a monk." The Elder took him inside the tower; after entertaining him and letting him rest, he asked him again: "Do you not have anywhere to live?" "No," replied the young man, "I want to live here." When the Elder heard this, he cut him off (this Elder had fallen into fornication and had a woman with him in his cell). After a short while, he said to the young man: "If you want to be helped, my

brother, go to the monastery, because I have a woman inside here." The young man responded: "Whether you have a concubine or a sister, I do not know; in any case, I came to serve you until I die."

After some time had passed and the brother continued to serve them in all things, without judging them in any way, the Elder and his concubine said to each other: "Is the burden of our sin not enough for us, without our giving account for this man's soul as well? Let us flee from here, then, and leave the cell to him." When they had taken whatever they could from among their belongings, they said to the brother: "We are going away to fulfill a vow; look after the cell for us." But scarcely had they departed, when the young man immediately realized their intention (that is, not to return) and ran after them. When they saw him, they were agitated and said to him: "How long are you going to be our condemnation? You have the cell at your disposal; stay there and take care of yourself." "I did not come for the cell," answered the young man. "I came here to serve you as a slave." As soon as they heard this reply, the Elder and his concubine perceived that their consciences were censuring them, and they decided to repent before God. From that very moment, the woman withdrew to a convent, while the Elder returned to his cell. In such a way were the two of them saved by the brother's patience.

Do you see that the Elder, who thought correctly, was not ignorant of the law of the Spirit, even though he had fallen into the sin of fornication? For this reason, when the brother came to his cell, he did not completely reject him, although he did not want to have another person living with him. But after rebuffing him a little, as soon as he saw that his visitor was not disposed to leave, he took him in even against his own will, discerning that the brother was inspired by God to persist in staying. He was afraid of sinning before God, Who was prompting the young man and Who has said: "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (St. John 6:37). Also, since the younger brother exercised patience for a long time and offered his service to him without any pretext, for this reason the Elder did not dare to dismiss him, but preferred, rather, to abandon his own cell than to cast out him who had come and stayed by Divine Providence, which had also informed the Elder that it would be unjust for him to make the young man leave. Let this law, then, be put into practice by us without any alteration.

D. From St. Ephraim

Do not humiliate old men, when they decide to come and labor in the monastic life, for the Lord did not reject those who came at the eleventh hour (St. Matthew 20:6). You do not know whether this old man may be a vessel of election.

* We are speaking, here, of the desert of Upper Egypt, where it rains but very rarely, and very little at that. According to contemporary observations, there was one period during which not a single drop of rain fell in this region for seventeen years.

Hypothesis XXVIII

From what point we should begin a life of asceticism; all who start need patience and need to put pressure on themselves, since virtue appears difficult at the beginning, on account of one's passions and prejudices; but later on it proves to be much easier to acquire; a strong foundation at the beginning is very beneficial; it is impossible to follow Christ or gain any virtue at all if one does not prepare himself as though his death were imminent.

A. From the Life of St. Synkletike

The Blessed Synkletike said that the struggle for those who come to God is great and requires much toil at the beginning, but that indescribable joy follows subsequently. Just as those who want to kindle a fire choke from the smoke and the tears at the start, but later on accomplish what they are seeking, so it happens with us in precisely the same way, if we really want to ignite the Divine fire in our hearts; we attempt to do it with tears and toil. For the Lord says: "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?" (St. Luke 12:49). Some people, out of negligence, bear with the smoke and put up with toiling a little, but do not succeed in igniting the fire, since they soon abandon the attempt and do not manage to endure to the end.

B. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Someone asked an Elder: "Father, why am I continually negligent?" The Elder replied: "Because you have not yet seen the sun."

2. An Elder said: "To compel ourselves in all things (in order to attain the good), this is the road that leads to God."

3. The same Elder said: "He who forces himself for the sake of God is like a Confessor (of the Faith)."

St. Synkletike

4. Some brothers asked one of the Fathers: "How is it that the soul does not run to the promises of God, which He gave through the Holy Scriptures, but is inclined to impure things?" "In my opinion," answered the Elder, "it has not yet tasted heavenly things, and this is why it has a strong desire for impure things."

5. A brother asked Abba Poimen: "My body has grown old and feeble, but the passions have not weakened." "The passions are like roots full of thorns," replied the Elder. "This means that just as one who attempts to pull out these roots will cut his hands so much that blood runs from them, so also he who wishes to uproot his passions needs much toil and sweat."

6. Abba Joseph said to Abba Lot: "You cannot become a monk unless you first become completely aflame with the desire for virtue, unless you become indifferent to honor and rest, unless you cut off the desires of your heart, and unless you take care to keep all the commandments of God."

C. From Abba Isaiah

My brother, do not be faint-hearted in any task that you attempt, lest the activities of the Enemy enter into your soul; for just as a dilapidated house outside the city becomes a place of squalor, so also does the soul of a lazy novice become a dwelling-place for every disgraceful passion.

D. From Abba Mark

Every man who has been Baptized in an Orthodox manner has mystically received the whole of Divine Grace; it is fulfilled thereafter through doing the commandments of God. A commandment of Christ that is performed for conscience's sake, that is, with a definite purpose, bestows consolation, which corresponds to the amount of toil the heart expends in fulfilling the commandments.

E. From St. Diadochos

The path of virtue seems very difficult and tiring for those who are beginning to love godliness, not because virtue is so by nature, but be-

cause man, from the moment he is born, consorts with a multitude of different pleasures. To those, however, who can reach the midpoint on the path of virtue, it appears easy and very pleasing; for wickedness is subdued when one is accustomed to performing good deeds, and through the coöperation of the good it disappears, along with the recollection of irrational pleasures. This is why the Lord, when preparing us to follow the way of salvation, tells us: "Strait and full of affliction is the way, which leadeth unto the Kingdom of Heaven, and few there be that traverse it" (St. Matthew 7:14). But to those who want with all their heart to approach the keeping of God's holy commandments, He says: "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (St. Matthew 11:30).

When we are still at the beginning of the struggle, then, we should put pressure on our will, so as to carry out the holy commandments of God, that our good Lord might see our resolve and our labors—that we have the desire to serve His glorious wishes with great delight—and that He might then help us to fulfill His holy Will. It is then that our will is prepared by the Lord for us to do what is good without ceasing and with much joy; that is, we shall then understand that God is He Who grants to the soul the will and power to fulfill the Divine Will.

F. From Abba Isaac

Blessed are those who have girded their loins with patience and hope and have cast themselves into the sea of afflictions, because of their love for God, with simplicity and free from preoccupations, without even flinching at the waves that rise up and without fearing the roar and roughness of the sea. These men are blessed because they are swiftly brought safely to the haven of the Kingdom; they find rest in the tabernacles of those who have labored well and also rejoice with the joy which hope engenders in their souls. All who run with hope on the winding and uneven road of salvation do not turn back; nor do they insist on examining the cause of the unevenness. When they have traversed the road and honorably completed its course, then, reflecting on the difficulties and irregularities of the road, they thank God that He rescued them from so many great dangers, without their knowing how.

Those, however, who occupy their minds with many thoughts and wish to pass themselves off as wise, who indulge in the deceptions of their own thoughts and entwine fear with their spiritual preparation, and who strive to foresee the cause of things that might harm them, are for the most part to be found forever standing at the front doors of their

houses. Holy Scripture speaks the truth about such ones, when it writes: "A sluggard when sent on a journey will say, 'There is a lion in the way, a murderous lion in the streets'" (Proverbs 26:13); they are like those who say: "We saw the sons of giants, and we were before them as locusts" (Numbers 13:33; Deuteronomy 1:28). These are the people who, at the hour of death, are found without spiritual fruits, who always want to be wise, but never decide to make a beginning.

Be careful that much wisdom does not become a snare before you and a cause of your slipping; but relying on your boldness, approach God and begin to walk in the fervor of your original enthusiasm on the bloodstained path, without giving any thought to your body or entertaining superfluous things, and thus being found lacking in the knowledge of God. The farmer who fears, or who waits for favorable winds to come, will never sow. Death for the sake of God is preferable to a life full of shame and indolence.

When you want to begin a Godly work, first give a promise to God that you will not live for the present life and that you are prepared to die, being thereby indifferent to all earthly things. You should always keep this in your mind, in which case you will be able, with God's help, to struggle and be victorious. Hope for the present life enervates one's mind and does not allow a man to make progress in anything good. But as for you, do not approach the performance of good work with dual thoughts—about the world and about God (something which leads to laxity)—so that your toil may not prove useless and your efforts at spiritual cultivation may not prove arduous. But begin to do what is good with courage and unhesitating faith in God, since you know that the Lord is merciful and is ever ready to help those who seek Him, rewarding with generosity and great bounties the good toil of those who have labored, granting to us His Grace, not in proportion to our work, but according to the measure of the eagerness and faith of our hearts. For He it is Who says: "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee" (St. Matthew 8:13).

Whoever, then, wants to come after Him as His follower, let him deny himself, in accordance with what He said (St. Matthew 16:24), and thus will he be able, having taken up his cross, to follow Him; for the Cross shows that we are ready for every affliction and every hardship, and even for death itself. Just as he who has been made ready to be crucified has in his mind the thought of death, which is the only thing he thinks about, and in this way comes forth to the place of execution as a man who does not reckon that he has even a short time to live in this

world, so should he think who desires to put into practice what the Lord says: "If any man will come after Me...." That is, "he who wishes"—the Lord says—"to live in this world will remove himself from true life; but he who thinks, out of longing for Me, to sacrifice his life will not suffer any reproach or harm in eternal life."

From henceforth, then, prepare to absent your soul wholly from this life, and "I will give you eternal life"—says the Lord—"just as I promised you; and in this life I will demonstrate My promise in deed, and henceforth you will receive assurance of the good things to come and pledges of these goods." Unless, then, you first turn away from the present life, you will not find eternal life; and once you have begun to struggle in preparing for this, then you will regard all those things that are reckoned to be exceedingly tiresome and distressing as unworthy of consideration. For unless one first turns from his life in the world, on account of his desire for the future life, one cannot withstand afflictions.

Question

He who has separated himself from every distraction and care, and with this preparation has entered into the struggle—at what point should he begin to wrestle against sin?

Answer

Fasting and vigils are the foundations of all the virtues; for when they are undertaken with discretion, these virtues help a man to attain every good. That is, the beginning of all evils is the comfort of the belly and the softness that comes from sleep, which excites the desire for fornication, dulls the mind, and makes one continually gross and darkened. Just as the desire for light comes to healthy eyes, so also he who fasts with discernment desires prayer; for when one begins to fast, as a result of this fasting, his mind starts gradually to wake up and he experiences the desire to converse with God. But also the body, when it fasts, and is not burdened with satiety, does not need to sleep for the entire night in bed, but wakes up eagerly to serve God.

To the extent, then, that the seal of fasting is placed on a man's body, his mind contemplates with compunction, his heart wells up with prayer, and austerity is imprinted on his face, while shameful thoughts remain far from this man. Fasting is the adversary of evil desires and vain associations. Fasting is a good road that leads to every good deed,

and he who neglects it confounds all the virtues; for this is a commandment that was imposed by God on our nature from the very beginning for our protection [i.e., to avoid the forbidden fruit—*Trans.*], and man subsequently fell into sin by transgressing the commandment to fast.

From the point that the fall began, spiritual athletes have been struggling to return to the fear of God by observing the law of continence and by fulfilling all of the commandments; it was from here that the Redeemer of our race Himself commenced His fight against the Devil. After Baptism, His Spirit led Him into the desert, where He fasted for forty days and forty nights (St. Matthew 4:2).

In the same way, then, all who come out of the world to follow Jesus should lay the foundations of a Godly edifice on the same ground (fasting). If He Who ordained our salvation fasted, who among those who want to keep this law need not fast? Up to that point, the human race did not know victory, nor did the Devil ever experience defeat from our nature; with this weapon (of fasting), however, he has again been made powerless, as in the beginning.

Our Lord, the Author of victory over the Devil, placed the first crown of victory on the head of man. From the time, therefore, when the adversary sees this weapon in a man, he is immediately frightened, recalling the defeat whereby he was overcome by the Savior in the desert, wherein his power was enfeebled with the weapon given to us by the Author of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10). This weapon is very powerful at fending off the missiles hurled by the Enemy; moreover, it provides great boldness within us in the waging of warfare; for, though a man's body be wearied and humiliated at those times when he is beset by the phalanx of the demons, nonetheless his heart is thus armed with courage and boldness, and he stands up against his foes more gallantly and fights more bravely against them, burning continually with aggressive zeal against them. The struggler does not stop; nor does he allow himself to rest, until he has completely chased away these foes from himself and annihilated them, with the help of God and by the practice of the other commandments.

When the zealot Elias was contending sedulously for the law of God, he passed his time in fasting; for fasting reminds one who properly undertakes it of the commandments of the Spirit and binds the old law to the Grace that was given to us by Christ. Whoever disregards fasting is negligent and weak in all other struggles, as well, and clearly shows his spiritual debility to the Enemy by his neglect of fasting; it becomes

evident that he is entering the struggle unarmed. This is why the Enemy attacks him boldly and without any toil overcomes him as one who is faint-hearted and defenseless. He quickly knocks him to the ground, insofar as all the man's limbs are not ready to suffer the darts released by the Enemy, since they are not fortified by this strong weapon of the fast, which we received from our Master.

G. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Zosimas said that the Grace of God always follows close on our intentions and that with the help of Grace we succeed in accomplishing every good thing; yet we do not seek to make a start on doing good, nor do we display a great and eager intention to attract the Grace of God to help us. If we ever do manifest some intention to do good, this intention is paltry and sluggish and does not make us worthy to receive any good from God. Do we not know that all of our spiritual endeavors are reminiscent of a seed and the fruit that it bears? It is like the farmer who sows seeds on his land, but later awaits the mercy of God; God then proceeds to send His bounty with rains and favorable winds at the appropriate time, so that the seeds which the farmer threw into the earth may sprout, grow, and come to perfection. In this way, God helps him to gain many crops from a few seeds.

The same thing happens to us, too. Insofar as we sow an intention that is rich and generous in good deeds, then we shall find the Grace from God whereby we will henceforth be able to accomplish all good things without difficulty and toil. We see the same thing happen in the case of skills. He who comes to learn a skill toils at the beginning and experiences failure, and often comes close to death; in spite of all this, however, he does not lose his pluck, nor is he discouraged, but he tries once more. However often he fails, at least as often he also seeks to correct himself, showing his good intention to the expert. For if he loses heart and withdraws, he will not learn anything; on the contrary, he will only become accustomed gradually to the skill and learn it perfectly when he displays patience and works with exertion and persistence, being corrected by the expert whenever he makes a mistake. After he has learned the skill well, then he performs his work with ease, so as to gain his livelihood from it.

He who wishes to attain some virtue should act in this way; that is, at the outset he should arm himself with bravery and show great resolve, and then should continue patiently doing what is good, ever call-

ing on God to help and defend him. He should not be indifferent when he fails, or despair and abandon the attempt, because in that case he will never be able to accomplish anything good. He should get up, whenever he happens to fall, and increase his zeal through hope, awaiting God's mercy with patience.

This is what Abba Moses had to say: "The strength of those who wish to acquire the virtues is as follows: if they fall, let them not lose their courage, but let them be sure to make a new beginning at their endeavor. Insofar, then, as we put all our energy into practicing the virtues, let us await the Lord, showing Him a generous resolve and calling on His aid; and without fail He will strengthen us with His mercy and bestow His Grace on us in abundance, in which case we will accomplish every good easily and without exertion."

2. Once upon a time there was a young monk. When he would begin his services, he would be seized by cold and fever and be troubled by a severe headache. This monk would thus say to himself: "I am now sick, and perhaps I will die shortly; so let me do my service before I die." He compelled himself with this thought and in this way would finish his service. But scarcely would he finish praying than the fever and the headache ceased. However, when the time came for the next service, his ordeal would begin again. But since the monk had his attention directed towards this purpose, he would simply force himself to do his service. After a short time, by his persistence and patience, he was delivered from the warfare, with God's help.

3. An Elder once visited Abba Achillas and saw him spitting blood from his mouth. So he asked him: "What is that, Abba?" "It is a word of a brother who grieved me," he replied. "I struggled not to reveal this bitter word and I besought God to take the warfare away from me. This word became blood in my mouth, which I then spat out. Afterwards I felt relief and forgot my distress."

4. A monk was hungry from the morning, and he fought against his thought of not eating until the third hour came.* When the third hour arrived, he strove again not to eat until the sixth hour came; and when the sixth hour arrived, he moistened his rusks and said to his mind: "Let us wait until the ninth hour." When the ninth hour came, he prayed. Then he saw a Satanic energy coming out like smoke from his handicraft and rising up into the air. His hunger then ceased at once.

5. For the sake of asceticism, an Elder imposed a condition on himself of not drinking water for forty days. Although it was hot at times and he was exceedingly bothered by thirst, he washed his jug and filled it with water, placing it opposite himself. "Why are you doing this?" a brother asked him. "In order to endure more," replied the Elder, "so that by adding to the martyrdom of thirst the sight of the water, but not drinking it, I may in this way receive a greater reward from God."

6. An Elder said: "The reason why we do not make progress and are not aware of our real spiritual condition is that we do not have patience in the work that we begin, but wish to acquire virtue without effort. We are changeable and also move around easily, going from place to place without difficulty, because we think it is possible to find some place where the Devil does not exist."

7. The same Elder said: "If a monk works hard for a few days, and is negligent afterwards, and works again and is again negligent, this monk never accomplishes anything; nor does he acquire patience."

H. From St. Ephraim

My beloved: "Gather instruction from thy youth up, and so shalt thou find wisdom until thine old age" (Ecclesiasticus 6:18). From your youth you should sow the seeds of virtue in the field of your soul, taking care lest thorns sprout and grow up in it, as if it were dry land. Produce good fruit in it and glorify Him Who gives you strength.

I. From Abba Isaac

1. The basis of all good things, the liberation of the soul from the captivity of the Enemy, and the road that leads to light and life, are attained by the two following means: by settling steadfastly in a single place and always fasting. That is, by regulating your life wisely and prudently, practicing restraint of the flesh, and remaining in a quiet place, let your mind be occupied ceaselessly with God and meditation upon Him. He who puts these two rules into practice will make great progress and set out henceforth to attain all the virtues.

2. A cowardly man means one who suffers from two diseases: a lack of faith and an inordinate love for his body. It is clear that he who de-

spises these things believes wholeheartedly in God and awaits things to come (eternal life). Boldness of heart and contempt for dangers derives from one of the following two attitudes: either from hard-heartedness or from great faith in God. However, hard-heartedness is accompanied by pride, while faith is accompanied by humility of heart.

* The third hour is, today, nine o'clock in the morning.

Hypothesis XXIX

The demons wage a furious war against him who struggles with all his strength, whereas they are uninterested in the negligent, since they have them at their beck and call; those who want the good find God to be their ally, Who permits wars for our spiritual profit.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. One of the Fathers recounts that at one time there lived an industrious monk, who was very attentive to his conduct. However, it happened that for a short time he neglected his spiritual duties. But he immediately realized his mistake, and reproving himself, said: "My soul, how long will you neglect your salvation and not fear the just judgment of God, lest your end should come while you are being negligent, in which case you will be handed over to eternal punishment?" With these words to himself, he awakened his soul again from negligence to perform the commandments of God.

Well then, one day, at the time when he was doing his service, the demons came and bothered him with some disturbance. The monk then said to them: "How long are you going to harass me? Are you not satisfied with the negligence that I showed previously?" "When you were in a state of negligence," the demons told him, "we had no interest in you; but as soon as you rose up against us, we rose up against you."

No sooner had the monk heard these things from the demons than he persevered still more intensely in carrying out the commandments of God, making progress in virtue by the Grace of Christ.

2. An Elder related that at one time a certain monk, who lived in Egypt, was walking along the road. When darkness fell, he went into a tomb to sleep, since it was cold. At that moment two demons were passing by, and the one said to the other: "Do you see what boldness this monk has, since he is even sleeping in a tomb? But come, let us annoy him." "Why should we annoy him?" replied the other. "He is ours, since he does what we want—eating, drinking, reproaching others, and neglecting his services. Why, then, should we dally with him? Let us go

and torment others, who grieve us and war against us night and day with prayer and the rest of their ascetic practices."

3. An Elder said: "O man, if you wish to live by the law of God, you will find the Lawgiver Himself to be your helper; but if you willingly decide to disobey the commandments of God, you will find the Devil hastening your fall." In another case, the same Elder said: "Act with good intention and you will receive strength from God."

B. From St. Ephraim

A brother should guard his heart and senses with every precaution, because while we live in this life we are in a great war and the Enemy rages above all against those who struggle, running hither and thither, as Holy Scripture says, "seeking whom he may devour" (I St. Peter 5:8). He must, then, offer stalwart resistance to this foe, calling on God as his ally. As for him who has made compromises with his passions, how will he war against them, since he has sold himself as a slave to pleasures and with all eagerness pays taxes to the tyrant? Where there is enmity, there is also war; and where there is war, there a struggle is waged; and where there is a struggle, crowns are offered.

If, then, anyone wishes to be freed from bitter slavery, let him undertake a war against the Enemy; this is what the Saints did, and after vanquishing the Enemy, they were deemed worthy of heavenly good things. But perhaps someone will ask: "If where there is enmity against the passions it is natural for war to occur there, as you say, how are we to look upon lovers of pleasure, who, fiercely beset by disgraceful passions, are yet unable to change?" I would respond to this: "I do not believe, my beloved, that theirs is a struggle in accordance with virtue and a spirit of resistance against the Tyrant. It is more likely that they have surrendered to the passion of voluptuousness, to which they are enslaved and which besets them. This is why those who are so enslaved have not even the intention of rising up against the Enemy."

Indeed, there is no harmony among things in conflict. However, in the case of those who have handed themselves over to the will of the Enemy and sold themselves to pleasures, how is it possible for theirs to be called a real war? If they are in conflict, this is not on account of their concern for virtue and their concern to confront the Enemy, but comes from the cruelty of him who lures them into iniquity, so that they will pay the customary tribute of sin, and who does not allow them any

respite from pursuing the most shameful desires, into which they willingly deliver themselves; for as it is written, "of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" (II St. Peter 2:19). Those about whom we are speaking are not led by force, without wishing it, but actually give tribute to fulfill the will of him who deceived them. Hence, when they accomplish the evil deed they aim at, they display no repentance and continence, and take no precaution against falling into the same fault.

Not so, however, is the warfare of the real strugglers. For they fight back when they are warred against; when they are burning (from evil desire), they do not yield, but endure. When the occasion of sin is before them, they abhor it because of their fear of the Lord. If any of them falls for a moment, he quickly picks himself up again. From among men who have been taken captive by barbarians and are under the thumb of a tyrant, all those who rejoice at the successes of the enemy by whom they have been captured gladly remain close to the foe, without fetters and confinement, and struggle for the victory of the enemy—and, in fact, are used as spies, to the detriment of their own compatriots.

By contrast, however, not all who are distressed on account of the captivity into which they have fallen remain satisfied by the morals of the barbarians and their iniquitous behavior. They hasten to escape from them, waiting for an opportunity to be rescued and to return to their comrades, and to acquire their former freedom. They pray for their compatriots to come to their aid as allies. As soon as they are rescued from the adversaries, they at once become their opponents; they fight with their compatriots and together with them they crush the enemy. All those, then, who wish to be freed from the bitter slavery of the Enemy, ought to resist his wishes and undertake open warfare against him, after they have uttered to him with all their hearts the words of the Children: "Be assured, O Devil, that we will no longer hear thy voice, nor will we serve thy pleasures" [*cf.* Daniel 3:18].

It is necessary for the strugglers to call on the aid of God during their struggle, saying to God, again, with the Children: "Lord, now we follow Thee with our whole heart, and we fear Thee, and we seek Thy face; put us not to shame. But deal with us according to Thy meekness, and according to the abundance of Thy mercy. Deliver us according to Thy marvelous works, and give glory to Thy name, O Lord. And let all them that do evils to Thy servants be confounded, and let them be put to shame in all their might; and let their strength be broken. And let them know that Thou art Lord, the only God, and glorious over all the world"

(Song of the Three Youths 41-45). If the tyrant goes out of his mind and heats up the furnace of pleasures seven times stronger, let those who have rested their hopes in the Lord have courage; for in a short time the furnace will be changed into dew, and the Tyrant, whom they had previously feared, will himself henceforth tremble at their shadow, because of the help that was given to them from on high.

C. From Abba Isaac the Syrian

When you wish to begin a good work, you should first prepare yourself to face the temptations that are going to attack you; for when the adversary sees someone beginning a pleasing way of life with fervent faith, he is accustomed to impede him with fearful temptations of different kinds, so that the man may lose his nerve as a result and abandon the good intention of his heart.

God allows you to fall into temptation, so that you may persistently knock on the door of His mercy and so that, from fear of afflictions, the memory of God may be implanted in your mind and you may approach Him through prayers, in which case your heart will be sanctified by ceaseless recollection of the name of God. When you supplicate Him with faith, He will hear you, and you will learn that it is God Who rescued you. Then you will understand that your Creator strengthens you and guards you. For the protection of God and His Providence encompass all men. However, they do not become visible except to those who have purified themselves from sin and who constantly study the law of God; the help and providence of God are revealed exceptionally to them, when they enter into great temptation for the sake of the truth. They then perceive the help of God very clearly by means of the spiritual mind.

Some have seen this help even with their bodily eyes, in proportion to their temptations. In such a way, they came to know that God defended them, and they were aroused to perform noble deeds, as we are told in the case of Jacob, Joshua the son of Nun, the Three Children, the Apostle Peter, and the rest of the Saints who struggled for Christ's sake. Divine help appeared to them visibly in human form, encouraging them and preparing them to contend for piety. The Fathers who inhabited the desert and chased the demons away from it, and who made the desert a dwelling-place of human angels, were constantly visited by the Holy Angels. They protected the Fathers in every kind of way and helped them in all things. They strengthened them and delivered them from

temptations and from the savagery of the demons, who assailed them furiously.

And even to this day the help of God is not removed from men who have totally dedicated themselves to pleasing God, but is close to all who call on Him.

D. From St. Maximos

They say that God allows the demons to make war on us for five reasons: the first, they say, is so that we may distinguish between virtue and vice by making war and being warred against; secondly, so that we may acquire virtue by warfare and toil, and possess it sure and steadfast; thirdly, so that we may not think highly of ourselves when we make progress in virtue, but may learn to be humble; fourthly, so that we may completely hate vice, after we have experienced it; and finally, apart from all of these, the fifth reason is so that we may not forget our frailty or the power of God which helped us to attain to passionlessness.

E. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother who was being bothered by demons went to an Elder and confessed the temptations that he was suffering. The Elder told him: "Brother, do not let the temptations that are happening to you frighten you; for to the extent that the enemies see the soul ascending and communing with God, they are grieved and they melt from their envy. It is impossible for God and His Angels not to be present when a man is being tempted and seeks a helping hand. So do not cease to raise your eyes to Him continually and call on Him with humility to help you. At the same time, when you are being tempted, think on the invincible power of God, your infirmity, and the cruelty of the Enemy, and you will swiftly attain the aid of God."

2. A brother asked an Elder, saying: "Worldly people neglect fasting; have disdain for prayer; refrain from keeping vigil; eat every kind of food; fulfill their desires, in their relations with each other, for giving and receiving; devour one another; and consume the greater part of the day in swearing oaths and breaking them. How is it that, in spite of this, they do not fall; nor do they say, 'We have sinned,' nor are they excluded from Divine Communion? We monks are always engrossed in fasts, vigils, xerophagy, and sleeping on the ground, and are deprived of every

bodily relaxation, mourning and lamenting. Why in spite of all this do we say that we are lost and condemned to the Gehenna of fire?"

The Elder groaned and replied: "You were right, brother, in saying that worldly people do not fall. The reason is that when they fall one time into a deplorable and fearful sin, they can no longer pick themselves up, since they do not even have a place from which to fall, insofar as, out of great ignorance, they have remained for quite a long time in their first fall and do not even realize that they have fallen. Why should the Devil have any interest in wrestling with them, when they are constantly lying on the ground? Monks, however, are openly drawn up against the adversary and are incessantly fighting him; this is why they sometimes win, but at other times are beaten. They do not cease falling and getting up again, bothering and being bothered, striking and being struck, until by the Grace of God they overcome the adversary and render him impotent and feeble toward themselves. Then, after they are completely at peace with God and unceasingly enjoy His calm and joy in their souls, they are at rest."

3. Abba Poimen said about Abba John the Short that, when he besought God, the passions fled from him and he remained free from anxiety. So he went to an Elder and said: "I see myself at rest and have no warfare." The Elder replied to him: "Go and beseech God that warfare should return to you, because it is through wars that the soul makes progress." So Abba John besought God and no longer prayed to escape from warfare, but said continually: "Lord, give me patience in wars."

4. Abba Copris said: "Blessed is he who endures toil and gives thanks to God." The same Elder was once ill for a long time and remained on his bed. During that time he gave thanks to God and never satisfied his own will.

5. An Elder said that a certain brother was bothered by a thought for nine years and, out of piety, condemned himself, saying: "I have lost my soul," thinking himself to be the cause of the temptation. Later on, when he was weighed down and in despair about his salvation—although he should not have been—he said: "Let me return to the world, since I have fallen into perdition." Then, just as he was departing, a voice came to him on the road: "The nine years that you were in temptation bestowed crowns on you. For this reason, return to your place and I will relieve you of your thoughts." So the brother returned and

found respite. From this, we learn that wars provide crowns to those who struggle.

6. An Elder said: "At the outset, when a monk abandons the world to devote himself to asceticism, God does not allow the demons to harass this man violently, lest he be frightened and startled by this experience and return quickly to the world. However, when a monk, with the passing of time, makes progress in his spiritual labor, then battles involving carnal desires and the other pleasures, and likewise anger, hatred, and the other passions, are unleashed against him; it is then that a man needs to be humbled and to mourn, condemning and accusing himself alone. In such a way, through temptations, he learns patience, acquires experience and discernment, and takes refuge thenceforth in God.

"Some monks, thrown into confusion and giving way beneath the unbearable burden of grief, having been plunged into the depth of despair, have returned to the world in their hearts, while others returned to it in their bodies. As for us, my brother, let us never despair or become indifferent, but let us endure temptations with valor and long-suffering, giving thanks to God for all that befalls us. For gratitude to God renders all the machinations of the Enemy useless.

"Just as one who has his hands full of pitch cannot clean them other than with olive oil (*elaion*), so also is it with us; from the moment we are defiled by sin, we are cleansed only by the mercy (*eleos*) and love for mankind of our Savior Jesus Christ. So let us come before Him in every temptation and let us persist in calling on His aid, giving Him thanks for everything; and then we will see the adversary overcome with ease and sitting opposite us weak and powerless."

7. An Elder said: "If God forgives us—although we do evil deeds—and is long-suffering towards us, will He not help us all the more if we are willing to do good deeds?"

F. From St. Ephraim

He who wishes to be pleasing to God, to be proved, through faith, an heir of God, and to be called a son of God born of the Holy Spirit, must above all arm himself with patience and long-suffering, enduring with valor and gratitude the afflictions and needs that he will encounter: namely, physical illnesses and the passions, the reproaches and insults

of men, or the various unseen battles which are brought against the soul by the spirits of wickedness, who aim to entice it into negligence and debility.

God permits all of these things in His Providence, in order that each man may be tested by different afflictions, and that those may be revealed who love God with all their hearts, insofar as they endure all the assaults of the Evil One valiantly and gladly and are not alienated from their hope and faith in God, but always wait with faith and much patience to be delivered from sorrows through Grace. Hereby they will be able to cope with every temptation, and in such a way will attain to the promise, being themselves made worthy of the heavenly Kingdom, since they have walked in the footsteps of the Saints in many ages, as well as the footsteps of the Lord Himself, and have become partakers not only of His sufferings, but also of His glory.

Be sure, then, to understand, and see that from the beginning all of the Fathers, that is, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and Martyrs, having passed through the way of afflictions and temptations and having endured their various difficulties with joy and fortitude, were only able to please God because they waited in hope for the reward that is bestowed on the struggler for his exertions. This truth is consonant with Holy Scripture: "My son, if thou come to serve the Lord God, prepare thy soul for temptation; set thy heart aright and constantly endure" (Ecclesiasticus 2:1-2). This means that you should hope in God and be strengthened by this hope in Him.

The Apostle also says: "But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons" (Hebrews 12:8). In another place, Holy Scripture says: "Accept everything that is brought against thee as good, knowing that without God nothing happens" [*cf.* Epistle of Barnabas, 19:6.] Indeed, the Lord Himself blesses all those who struggle for His sake and endure terrible tribulations, either openly from men or secretly from the spirits of evil which, as it is said, struggle against the soul that loves God and which hurl different afflictions at it in order to prevent it from entering into eternal life, to the extent that it has slipped into negligence and despair. Temptations, then, test and separate the souls that love God from those that do not love Him, and in this way they show which men are worthy of God and which are unworthy of Him.

Every soul, then, that wishes to appear pleasing before God should valiantly maintain patience and hope, above all, and with these virtues it will be able to endure and face all of the harassment and uprisings of

the Evil One. For God does not allow the soul that hopes in Him and waits on Him to fall into such great temptation that it becomes desperate, burdened beyond what it is capable of enduring. Not even the Evil One tempts and bothers the soul as much as he wishes, but only to the extent that he is permitted by God; for our Fashioner knows to what extent the soul should enter into temptation and vexation, and permits only that much.

Let us take the potter as an example. He fashions earthenware vessels and knows how long he should leave them in the fire; for if they do not pass through the fire, people cannot use them. He does not leave them in the furnace longer than necessary, lest they be destroyed by the fire, and he does not take them out of the furnace before the proper time, lest they become brittle and prove useless. Similarly, we do not encumber all beasts of burden with the same load, but in proportion to the stamina of each animal. And again, a boat has certain marks which show up to what point it can be loaded, so that it can sail the sea without damage.

If God gave men such great knowledge and discernment for securely managing the illusory and corruptible things of this world, will not He, Who bestows wisdom and understanding, know much better how many trials, and of what kind, are needed by the souls that want to be pleasing to Him, so that they may be useful to Him and also be worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven? Just as hemp is useless in producing very fine threads, unless it has first been heavily pummeled, in the same way, the more the God-loving soul is tormented and roughened, the purer and more useful it becomes. In being humbled and refined through many temptations and afflictions, and enduring them valiantly, it proves purer and more useful for spiritual labor; and finally, after it has entered rejoicing into the Kingdom of Heaven, it will become forever an heir of the heavenly bridal chambers.

Hypothesis XXX

We should not regard the demons as causes of all the sins we commit, but rather ourselves; for the demons are unable to harm those who are attentive, since the help that comes from God is great; and that God allows struggles in proportion to the strength of men.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Anthony said that God does not unleash wars on this generation with the same vehemence as He did for the ancients; for He knows that the men of today are weak and lack stamina.

2. Abraham, a disciple of Abba Agathon, asked Abba Poimen: "What should I do when the demons war against me fiercely?" "*Are* the demons making war on you?" replied the Elder. "They do not make war on us, as long as we are doing our own wills; for our wills have become demons, and it is these that afflict us, in order that we may satisfy them. If you want to learn whom the demons warred against, know that it was against Moses and those like him."

3. A brother asked Abba Pambo: "Why do the demons prevent me from doing good to my neighbor?" The Elder replied: "Do not say this; otherwise you are making God a liar. You should say rather: 'I have no desire at all to do good to another person.' For God, knowing our wickedness in advance, said in Holy Scripture: 'I gave unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy' (St. Luke 10:19)."

4. A brother asked Abba Sisoes: "What should I do about my passions and demons?" The Elder replied: "Every man is tempted by his own 'lust' (St. James 1:14)."

5. St. Synkletike said: "The better athletes become, the stronger are the adversaries against whom they contend."

6. Once, Abba Moses was severely beset by thoughts of fornication and, unable to sit any longer in his cell, departed and confessed his thoughts to Abba Isidore. The Elder told him to return to his cell. However, not wishing at all to listen to this advice, he replied to Abba Isidore: "I can no longer hold out, Abba." The Elder then took Abba Moses with him and, after climbing onto the roof of the cell, said: "Look towards the West." So he looked carefully in that direction and saw a host of demons provoking confusion and causing disturbance with their warmongering. Then Abba Isidore said again: "Now look towards the East." When he turned to the East, Abba Moses saw countless hosts of Holy Angels surrounded in glory. The Elder then said to Moses: "There! These that you see are the ones the Lord sends to help the Saints who struggle; but the ones that you saw previously in the West are those who make war on them. Our allies, therefore, are greater in number. This is why you should have courage and not be afraid." After this, Abba Moses gave thanks to God, took courage, and returned to his cell.

7. An Elder said: "When a monk first renounces the world, the demons are not permitted to harass him violently, lest he be startled and frightened and thus return quickly to the world. However, when, with the passing of time, he makes progress in ascetic labors, then battles involving fleshly desires and pleasures are unleashed against him. Whereupon the monk is distressed and feels the need to be humbled and to mourn and to condemn and accuse himself for all the sins that he has committed and now commits. Stripped in this way by temptations, he learns patience, acquires experience and discernment, and takes refuge in God, thereafter, with tears. Then God dispels the machinations of the Enemy and little by little brings the monk to respite. Some, who have been remiss in their effort, have either killed themselves, out of their great distress, or have returned to the world, defeated by great grief."

B. From St. John Cassian

Abba Serinos said that the demons do not in consort, at the same time, stir up all the passions in men, but each passion has its special and appointed evil spirit, which inspires the respective passion in men.

Some evil spirits, that is, are delighted by the impurity, filth, and stench of pleasures; others, again, by blasphemies; others rejoice in anger and rage; others in grief; others in vainglory; and yet others in arrogance. Each of these evil spirits prefers to incite incessantly that pas-

sion which he sees the soul gladly entertain.

Likewise, they do not vex all men in the same way; nor do they sow their evil in all men in a similar fashion, but variously and in proportion to the specific conditions presented by circumstances, persons, and places. Among themselves, the evil spirits either work together; or, at times, the one yields his place to the other, maintaining, for all that, neither conformity nor order, as such, in their relations with each other. For, as Scripture says, "Thou wilt seek understanding from evil men, and wilt not find it; and our enemies are void of understanding" (Isaiah 56:11; Deuteronomy 32:31). In spite of this, the demons somehow achieve unanimity among themselves, in conducting their warfare against us, when they cede to each other, as we said, opportunities and places for arousing the passions. For nobody can be deluded by vainglory and inflamed by a desire for fornication at the same moment; nor, again, can he be inflated with arrogance and degraded by gluttony, or laugh and guffaw like a foolish child and at the same time be provoked by the goads of anger. But each one of the evil spirits must attack a man in the appointed order and make war on him in this way; and when it turns out that he is defeated and withdraws from the embattled man, then he transfers the fight to another, more aggressive evil spirit.

We should be aware of this as well: not all of the demons have the same ferocity or the same power; rather, there is a difference among them, with regard to the power and also the energy with which they fight and the character of the desire that they instigate. That is to say, when the athletes of Christ begin the struggle for virtue, and while they are still weak, they fight against weaker spirits; but when these weaker spirits are defeated, they are always succeeded by more aggressive opponents. For if the arduous struggle were not waged in proportion to human capacity, then none of the strugglers would be able to endure the terrible savagery of such dreadful and innumerable enemies.

Nor could a man completely stand up against their hostile rage, unless he were shielded in this struggle by Christ, Who loves mankind, as the Mediator, the President of the contest, and the Judge, leveling out the struggle against the adversary according to our strength, impeding and removing from us the excessive onsets of the foes and not allowing us, as Scripture says, to experience temptations greater than our strength (I Corinthians 10:13), but contriving such that the conduct of the struggle should correspond to our stamina, that we might be able to endure it.

We believe, likewise, that the demons wage this war with weariness and toil; for they, too, have worry and distress, above all when they

clash in combat with patient and strong men, who do not give way. The Apostle confirms this when he tells us: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers" (Ephesians 6:12), and so on. And again, when he tells us elsewhere: "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air" (I Corinthians 9:26); and in another place, where he writes: "I have fought a good fight" (II St. Timothy 4:7).

Where struggle, wrestling, and combat are waged, of necessity desperate efforts, toil, and pain are observed in the opposing side; and just as we rejoice when we are victorious, whereas we are saddened when we are defeated, so it is with the demons; and as long as they overcome us, they are delighted. But whenever they achieve no success against us and are conquered, though they may have labored mightily, then the shame of defeat which might have been ours passes over to them, and the saying of Scripture is fulfilled: "His travail shall return upon his own head" (Psalm 7:17), or the other: "Let the trap that he hath hid catch himself" (Psalm 34:8).

The Prophet David was fully aware of all of these things, and he saw with the eyes of his soul this invisible warfare; and since he well knew how much our enemies rejoice when we fall, he said to God: "Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep in death. Lest mine enemy say: I have prevailed against him. Those that afflict me will rejoice if I am shaken" (Psalm 12:3-4). And again: "Let not them that are mine enemies rejoice over me.... Let them not say in their hearts: Aha, aha, it is well to our soul. Neither let them say, We have swallowed him up" (Psalm 34:19, 25). He also sang of the shame which the demons feel when they are overcome and whenever he prayed before God against them: "Let them be ashamed and confounded...that devise evils against me" (Psalm 34:4). And the Prophet Jeremiah says: "Let mine enemies be ashamed, but let me not be ashamed; bring upon them the wrath of Thine anger, and crush them with double destruction" (Jeremiah 17:18). The demons are, indeed, crushed twofold, when they are vanquished by us. The first crushing occurs when men attain to that sanctity which, although they once possessed it, they lost; the second stems from the fact that, although the demons are spirits, they are defeated by earthly and fleshly men.

C. From St. Maximos

Some say that there would not be evil in men, unless some other power enticed us towards it; but this power is nothing other than the neglect of the natural energies of the spiritual mind. For this reason, all

who are attentive to them constantly perform good deeds, and never bad ones. If you are willing, then, drive negligence far away from yourself, and with it you will expel evil, which is mistaken judgment in thoughts, accompanied by the misuse of things. The natural order of the rational part of the soul consists in our being made subject to the Divine *Logos* and in ruling over the irrational part of ourselves (namely the passions). Let this order, then, be preserved in all cases, and then evil will not exist in men; and neither will the power that lures us towards evil ever manifest itself.

D. From the *Gerontikon*

1. About Abba Isaiah the following is told: One time he took a wicker basket, went to the threshing floor, and said to the farmer: "Give me some wheat." "Have you reaped, Abba?" asked the farmer. "No," the Elder answered. "How is it that you want to take wheat without having reaped?" said the farmer again. The Elder responded: "So if a man does not reap, he does not receive pay?" "Certainly not," replied the farmer.

After this reply the Elder departed. When the brothers saw what he had done, they made a prostration and begged him to tell them the meaning of this action of his. The Elder replied: "I did it as an example, so that you might understand that if a man does not work, he does not receive his wages from God."

2. An Elder was sitting in the desert. His cell was about twelve miles from water. One time, as he was going to fetch water from the spring, he became resentful and said to himself: "Why should I toil in this way? I will come and settle near the spring." Scarcely had he thought this, than he sensed that someone was following him. He turned around and saw that the one who was following him was measuring his paces. The Elder then asked him: "Who are you?" "I am an Angel of the Lord," he replied, "and God sent me to measure your paces and give you the corresponding wages."

When the Elder heard this, he took courage, became more eager, and withdrew deeper into the desert by another five miles; that is, after he settled in his new abode, he was now seventeen miles away from the spring.

3. It is said of Abba Chæremon of Sketis that his cave was forty miles from the Church, and from the spring and the marsh from which he

gathered rushes, twelve miles; and yet, the Elder never grumbled at the great toil entailed in getting what he needed for his handiwork, in getting necessary water, and in going to Church every Sunday, as he was accustomed.

Hypothesis XXXI

One who has come to the ascetic life should only be clothed in monastic garb after he has been sufficiently trained in the virtues; the monastic schema *is honorable, soul-profiting, and salvific.*

A. From the Life of St. Ioannikios

When the wondrous Ioannikios was in the twelfth year of his sojourn in the desert, a revelation came to him from Heaven, through which he was called to withdraw from that place and set up his hut [*kalyve—Trans.*] at the hermitage in Eriste, and, at the same time, to assume monastic garb (for he had already given himself to great struggles before he put on the monastic *schema*, although such struggles, great and remarkable as they were, were but preparatory exercises).

During the summer, he arrived at the hermitage indicated to him by God and confided in Stephen, the Abbot of the monks there, the things that God had revealed to him. Without hesitation, Stephen clothed him in monastic garb the following day, after performing the customary prayers and ceremonies of the monastic Tonsure. Having been clothed in the monastic *schema*, then, he who had been a monastic even before taking the *schema*, threw himself into greater struggles than the previous ones and devoted himself to more arduous asceticism.

B. From the Life of St. Alypios

The reputation of Alypios the Great had made him well-known everywhere, and for this reason many people went to visit him—not only men, but also women who had decided to follow the way of repentance.

Since those who came were not few in number, he built two houses, each far from the other, in which he divided the sexes, that is, separating the men from the women (though not the spirits of those practicing asceticism). To the women ascetics, he gave a rule and commandment that they should never appear before men and should not even behold them. So much did those holy women heed and respect this command-

ment that, though the Saint himself often urged them to see their parents in exceptional instances or at death, they chose not to, wishing in this way to demonstrate that the commandment of their spiritual Father was stronger than even this natural urge.

Among these holy women dwelled the mother of St. Alypios. She practiced the same rule as the others, but she could not be persuaded to receive the monastic *schema*, even though her virtue was certainly remarkable, as we said in another place. She constantly refused to obey the many persistent entreaties of her son, maintaining that in the monastery the servant is the same as the nun.

However, it happened that a Divine dream brought her into immediate obedience to her son's entreaty, so that she now began to beg him fervently in this regard. It seemed to her, in this revealing dream, that she was hearing certain holy women chanting in melodious psalmody. She was so delighted by this chanting, that she wanted to enter the room where this wonderful choir was singing and to be united, herself, with the chanting women. But when she tried to enter, a guard prevented her, saying: "She who is not wearing the same *schema* as the servants of God may not communicate with them."

After this vision, the mother of the Saint was ashamed and perturbed. She immediately woke up and, without delay, ran to the Saint, recounted her dream, and persistently requested to receive that which she had, with the same intensity, previously refused. In this way, she thus took the same *schema* as the others, whom she had long resembled in her way of life and asceticism; and having sown many plants of virtue, she now reaps with gladness the incorruptible fruits of Heaven.

C. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder said: "Children, believe me when I tell you that however great the praise and glory that belong to a king who abandons his kingdom and becomes a monk, as great is the shame for a monk who spurns the monastic *schema* and becomes a king; and this because noetic things are incomparably more precious than sensible things."

2. There was once a great clairvoyant Elder who maintained that the power of Grace which he saw during a Baptism, near at hand to the person being baptized, he *also* saw at the time that a monk was receiving the Angelic *schema*.

St. Ephraim the Syrian

D. From St. Ephraim

My brother, be not impatient to receive the Angelic *schema;* for the Enemy implants in some people the unreasonable desire to demand the monastic *schema* when the time is not yet ripe (by reason of age). But as for you, my beloved, as long as you want to please God, be patient and hear what the Apostle says: "If thou mayest be made free, use slavery rather" (I Corinthians 7:21). Cast your gaze over the past generations and see that all of the Saints received promises from God with forbearance and patience, and goad yourself daily to be a fellow-heir with them one day in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Have you considered that the Patriarch Jacob worked as a slave in Mesopotamia for fourteen years next to Laban the Syrian, enduring the heat of the day and the frost of the night, for the sake of Rachel? Likewise, did not the beloved Joseph remain for several years as a slave in a foreign country? In this regard Scripture says: "Joseph was seventeen years old, feeding the sheep with his brethren" [Genesis 37:1]. Later on it says: "Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh" [Genesis 41:46]. Moses, the servant of the Lord, remained as a refugee in the land of Madiam for forty years. The Hebrews entered into the Promised Land after a journey of forty years. Prior to all of this, think how many years it was before Abraham received what had been promised to him by God. In general, all the Saints gained the Divine promises through ungrudging waiting. Wait, then, patiently on the Lord, and He will exalt you, when the right opportunity comes, and will present your virtue as light, and the judgment will shine for you as the sun shines at midday.

If, again, you have been deemed worthy to receive the holy clothing of the monk, do not give yourself over to airs, to the detriment of those who have waited to become monks of the Great *Schema* the following year. It is not a virtue for someone to think that he is first, but rather to endure temptations unto the end. Do not, therefore, say to yourself, when you receive the monastic Great *Schema:* "Now I have been delivered from sin." It would be preferable for you to toil, from this moment, even more greatly for the virtues, lest you cause yourself excessive harm. For many times up to now, and out of a desire for the greater *Schema,* you did not neglect your salvation. Up to now you were in the outer vault; but now you have entered the inner vault.

It should be clear, from now on, exactly which way you strongly desire: the broad and spacious one, which leads to perdition, or the narrow

and arduous one, which leads to eternal life. Do not, then, be negligent about your soul, lest you lose those things for which you have labored. You should never desire to come out of your cell without your mantle, even if it involves some pressing task; but wrap it round yourself and come out in this manner. For it is shameful for a monk to walk around as a young man with only a *leviton* or a tunic (*kolobion*).* For Scripture says: "Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals..., cast thy garment about thee, and follow me" (Acts 12:8).

E. From Abba Isaiah

Had our Lord Jesus Christ not first healed all the passions of mankind, for whose sake He came into the world, He would not have ascended the Cross. For before the Lord came into the world in the flesh, mankind was blind, dumb and paralyzed, and deaf, leprous, lame, and completely deadened by sin. But when He took pity on us and came into the world for our sake, He raised the dead, made the lame walk, the blind see, the dumb talk, the deaf hear, and lifted up mankind anew, delivered from every infirmity; and then He ascended the Cross.

They crucified two thieves with Him. The one who was suspended on His right glorified Him and begged Him: "Remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom" (St. Luke 23:42); while the one on the left blasphemed Him. This account shows that before the spiritual mind is awakened, it is found in enmity.

Only if our Lord Jesus Christ raises the mind from its negligence, and gives it the capacity to see again and to discern all things, will it be able to ascend the cross of self-denial.

Now, enmity, which blasphemes like the ungrateful thief, is manifested in harsh words, hoping that the mind might grow weary and relinquish the labor of asceticism, and thus return once more to negligence. This is the symbolic meaning of the two thieves, whom our Lord Jesus Christ separated from friendship with each other; and of whom the one mocked Jesus, waiting to see, as I said previously, whether he could alienate Him from hope, whereas the other had the patience to beseech Him until he heard the words: "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise" (St. Luke 23:43). It was he who tasted of the tree of eternal life.

F. From the *Gerontikon*

Abba Dioscoros said: "Brethren, by the Grace of God we received the holy *schema*, and already for all of this time we have been wearing it. Let us take care, then, that at the hour of judgment we be found wearing the wedding garment. For if we are wearing our heavenly garment, we shall not appear naked; but if we are found at that moment not wearing it, what are we to do, brothers? We will assuredly hear that voice saying to us: 'Cast ye them into the outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (St. Matthew 25:30).

"Alas! How vainly will we repent then for our negligence! How much shame and unbearable grief will we feel, when we see our Fathers caught up into the heavenly Kingdom, while we see ourselves cast by the Angels of retribution into the outer darkness and the eternal fire."

* The "*leviton*" was a monastic garment (rendered in Modern Greek as "*zostikon*"); for the meaning of "*kolobion*," see endnotes for Hypothesis XXVI, above.

Hypothesis XXXII

The faithful monk should display a manner of life that is appropriate to his schema; *for he who does not live in conformity with his* schema *is not faithful; likewise, a Godly old age is not characterized by length of time, but by the way in which a man lives.*

A. From the Life of St. Synkletike

The Blessed Synkletike said that we should not have a frivolous attitude towards the salvation of our souls, but should adorn them with all our deeds, and above all should not neglect their depths. Did we not remove hairs from our heads when we received the monastic Tonsure? Let us make sure that at the same time we remove the thorns from our noetic heads, namely, our souls. For our hair symbolizes worldly life, that is, the honors, the glories, the acquisition of money, bright garments, relaxing baths, the enjoyment of foods, and in general all the vanities and pleasures of the world. We resolved to remove all these things through the cutting of our hair.

Let us henceforth not exhibit in our lives any of these things, lest we scandalize those who see us. For as long as these wild beasts were covered up in the courts of worldly things, they created the impression that they did not exist; but now that they have been laid bare, they are plain for all to see. For this reason, even the most insignificant sins appear conspicuous in the virgin or the monk. Just as an animal, however small it may be, when it enters a clean house becomes immediately evident to all, the same thing happens with us also—the smallest fault becomes known to everyone. The same thing, however, does not happen to worldly people, because they are like foul caverns, where not even the largest of poisonous reptiles that nest in them are distinguishable, since they are concealed by the things that are always found in such places.

We should, then, always keep the houses of our souls clean and carefully inspect all around us, lest some soul-destroying insect has burrowed a hole for itself in the sanctuary of our minds; and we should always cense the place with holy incense, that is, with prayer. For just as venomous animals are driven away by the scent of the most potent

remedies, so it is natural that prayer, with fasting, should drive away shameful thoughts. We have made ourselves exiles; that is, we have stepped outside the conditions of worldly life. Since we have removed ourselves willingly from them, let us not any longer seek those things that belong to the world. There we had glory, here contempt; there we had an abundance of foods, here we are lacking even bread. All who commit injustices in the world are thrown into jails against their will; let us now imprison ourselves on account of our sins, so that the decision which we took by our own choice may free us from future punishment.

B. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder was once asked: "What is sufficient to make one a monk?" "In my opinion," answered the Elder, "if one aims at just one thing; namely, at God alone."

2. When the same Elder was again asked what a monk ought to do, he replied: "He should do everything that is good and refrain from everything that is bad."

3. The same Elder said that it is shameful if a monk should abandon all things and become a stranger to the world for the sake of God, and yet, after all of this, set off to Hell.

C. From St. Ephraim

It is not the Tonsure and the clothing that make the monk, but the longing for heavenly things and a life in accordance with the Will of God; the true monk is recognized by the latter. In the same way, the worldly man is not known by his hairstyle and clothing, but by his evil manner of life and his greed for worldly and material luxuries; for it is by these that the soul is made sinful. If you have renounced the world, be attentive to your spiritual labor, that you might acquire the pearl that you were seeking. For many have renounced the world and withdrawn from it; yet others have set aside military rank and have scorned their riches. But since in the end they were seduced by their own wills, they fell; for there is no worse sin than for one to be taken captive by his own will and to bypass what he judges to be correct.

These people appear to have *left* life in the world through the main or front door; in reality, however, they have *entered* the world through a

window and are more deeply involved in it. They are like the Israelites, who, after leaving the iron furnace, that is, Egypt, after having been preserved from harm in the Red Sea, and after having enjoyed so many and such great gifts from God, were shipwrecked on *terra firma*, since they were led astray by their own will. Out of such a great multitude of those who were counted at the time they departed, that is, six hundred thousand,* only two succeeded in reaching the Promised Land, i.e., Caleb and Joshua, the son of Nun, who did not disobey the words of the Lord and piously fulfilled the Will of the Most High. Just as it is not possible for someone to buy education with money or to attain skill without toil, so it is impossible for one to become a perfect monk without diligence and assiduous patience.

Be on guard, my brother, like a good soldier, and do not neglect the gift that has been given to you, lest you should someday be chastised on two counts: namely, that you grieved your parents in the flesh, as humans, and that you were not pleasing to God. Rather, you should struggle in such a way that those who see you may glorify God for your virtuous life; for it is written: "They that fear Thee will see me, and be glad" (Psalm 118:74); and elsewhere: "Much peace have they that love Thy law, and for them there is no stumbling block" (Psalm 118:165). That is, if you have renounced the world, your parents, your relatives, friends, fatherland, and riches for the sake of the Lord, what will it profit you when you enter into the monastic life in order to be saved, yet do the opposite? You will then be sinning against the Lord and will damage the name of monasticism. All the same, you will be praised undeservingly by people who knew you at another time and will say: "So-and-so is fortunate, because he hated this world and its glory and deceit, and no longer cares for anything earthly, since he has gone off and become a monk." But look here at yourself, passing your life not as a monk, but completely differently.

Let us consider what shame will overtake us, if those who now praise us go before us into the Kingdom of Heaven, and if those who now venerate us and say, "Pray for us sinners, O servants of Christ," are then at rest, while we are in distress because of the mistakes we made. For we and they shall not be judged by the same standards, as the Spirit of God Itself says: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (St. Luke 12:48); and "he who knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes" (St. Luke 12:47-48).

For this reason, my beloved, let us be vigilant, I beg you, as long as

we still have time; for behold, the arena of spiritual contests is open to all, and the Judge of the contest says, through the Apostle: "Run that ye may obtain; and every man that struggleth is temperate in all things" (I Corinthians 9:24-25). In another place he says: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (II St. Timothy 2:4-5). My brother, know that he who wishes to become a monk, yet does not undergo insult, disdain, and injury, cannot become a monk.

Beloved brother, if you renounce life in the world and become a monk, beware, for the means that the Enemy uses to ensnare you are many. Be careful lest, through your negligence, he finds an opportunity to attack you and, in order to alienate you from the straight path, fills you with thoughts like these: "Look, you have removed yourself from human beings and are sitting alone in your cell—and what is the importance of this? Do the wild beasts not stay quietly in *their* lairs?" But for your part, when you are attacked in this way, reproach the Enemy of our souls severely and tell him: "May the Lord put an end to you, O Devil, for you equate man, whom God fashioned in His image and likeness, with wild beasts, and you do not cease, you enemy of the Truth and adversary of our race, to pervert the straight ways of the Lord.

"Hear, then, you who hate good, what the difference is between the worldly man and the monk: He who wants to become a monk first renounces the world, and then his own will, and takes up his cross and follows our Savior Christ. He does not quarrel, curse, swear oaths, or denigrate anyone; nor does he busy himself with studying philosophical prattlings. He has self-control and is not prodigal. He has for friends those who serve God as he does. He does not consider anyone an enemy of mankind, except you alone, the Devil. He does not grieve or wrong anyone; rather, when he is wronged, he endures it with gladness. He is forbearing. He is not overcome by the madness of acquiring wealth. For how is it possible for him to be overcome by this insanity, when he has distributed his possessions and chosen poverty of his own volition, and when it is this that he now has for his glory and boast? He is not involved in business transactions; nor does he take care of a household; nor is he interested in how to please a wife. He does not worry about enlisting his sons in the army or about finding a husband for his daughter; he is not tied down by distractions, but remains free to occupy himself continuously with the salvation of his soul.

"He does not look for glory from men, nor does he give himself over

to airs, but as much as possible he humbles himself even more greatly. He is helpful and accommodating to all. He chants and does not allow his thoughts to wander aimlessly; instead of playing flutes, drums, and various other musical instruments, he engages in psalmody and prayer. Instead of laughing, he mourns and weeps in the most secret place of both his dwelling and his soul, begging God to forgive his sins.

"He does not pray only for himself, but also for the whole world. He does not busy himself with vain theories, but studies the lives of holy men. He does not reach out his hands to play cards, which wreaks havoc on the houses and souls of those who take delight in such, but to do the work of God and to read the Divine Scriptures. He is not concerned about parents, relatives, and any earthly affairs; he unceasingly calls to mind the future judgment and the promises of the Savior. And with these thoughts his inner world is rekindled, and he chases grief and languor away from himself. When bodily sickness comes to him, he rejoices, since his crown draws near.

"He resists all bodily pleasures, bearing in his mind the bitterness of the eternal punishments that await those who seek after pleasures. He blesses those who mock him, urges on those who curse him, and is long-suffering towards those who slander him; he endures different torments without complaining, comforted by the recollection of the Saviour's sufferings. These, and more and greater than these, are the works of the true monk. And how is it, O Devil, that you hate mankind and goodness, and compare such a life to life in the world? Flee far away from me, you evil spirit! The Lord commands you, through me the sinner, so that I may be able to search out the commandments of my God."

This, then, my beloved, is how you should resist him who fills you with such thoughts, and he will flee from you, with the help of Divine Grace.

D. From Abba Isaiah

Alas for us, since Christ-loving people venerate and embrace our bodies, which are polluted by impurity. We, indeed, are whited sepulchres (St. Matthew 23:27) on the outside, which emit the stench of deadly sin. Alas for us, because being foolish and thoughtless, we do not love the deeds of the Saints, but the praises shown them, which we hasten to usurp. While continually defiling our souls with unclean thoughts, we want to be considered holy and to be honored with the laudatory titles of the Saints.

E. From Abba Mark

Know, my brother, that he who does not completely deliver himself to be crucified with humility and contempt for himself, who does not debase himself so much that he is trampled upon, despised, wronged, laughed at, and jeered by all, and who does not accept all this treatment with joy and patience for the Lord's sake, and who does not scorn all the desires of men, whether glory, or honor, or praise, or pleasant foods, or drinks, or clothes, cannot become a true monk.

Now, when tests of this kind present themselves, and prizes and wreaths as well, how long will we make fools of ourselves with a feigned image of godliness, serving the Lord with deceit, being considered by men to be different from what we really are, yet appearing different before Him Who knows the secrets of men? For, although we are regarded as holy by many, we are still wild in our behavior, having the image of true godliness, without, however, having acquired its power before God [*cf.* II St. Timothy 3:5].

We rely on the righteousness of the outer man, wanting to please our fellow men with ostensible acts of kindness, in order to court their honors and praises, while we entirely ignore the inner life of virtue according to conscience. We are reckoned by many to be virginal and chaste; but for Him Who knows the secrets of men, we are polluted in soul, by consenting to sexual thoughts and through them the energies of the passions. As a result of this sham asceticism, and also of the praises of men, we fall down and our mind is blinded.

However, He will assuredly come Who discloses the secrets of darkness and reveals the dispositions of our hearts, the unerring Judge, He Who removes the outer appearance and displays the inner truth. Those who have conducted their lives with hypocrisy He will reveal to the heavenly Church above, before the Saints and the entire heavenly army, and He will send them off, dreadfully shamed, into the outer darkness—like those imprudent young women who guarded the outer virginity of the body (albeit, they were in no way condemned for *this*, and had a small amount of oil in their vessels; that is, they happened to have enough virtues and achievements to be obvious to men, and for this reason their lamps burned a little), but who, from negligence, ignorance, and slothfulness, were not careful to cleanse themselves of the host of passions that they kept hidden in the recesses of their souls and whose minds, for this reason, were gradually corrupted by diabolical forces, acting in consort with these forces by consenting to their promptings. As

a result of this spiritual sluggishness, they met with such an end that they were deprived of the joy of the Bridegroom and excluded from the heavenly Bride-chamber (St. Matthew 25:1-13).

Let us, therefore, reflect on these things, let us understand them and put them to the test, so that we may realize the state in which we find ourselves and correct ourselves, while we have time for repentance. If we do this, then our good works, being accomplished with spiritual purity and not defiled by a carnal outlook, will become acceptable to Christ, the heavenly High Priest, and will not be cast aside as a sinful sacrifice.

F. From Abba John Cassian (from the *Exhortation* of our Holy Father Pinouphrios, addressed to one renouncing the world)

Brother, do you realize how much time you remained in front of the doors of the monastery, before you were admitted just now? Please understand that we were putting off admitting you for the following reason: not because we do not wholeheartedly desire your salvation, as we do that of all who return to Christ, but because we did not want to give account before God for off-handedness and flippancy, for accepting you impetuously and without scrutiny; nor did we want to make you subject to a more serious punishment, in the event you should prove negligent and indifferent in the future, having been accepted at once, without serious consideration and before learning of the gravity and the responsibilities of the monastic undertaking.

For just as promises of glory and honor in the future have been given to all those who faithfully serve the Master, so very severe punishments are in store for those who approach this monastic way of life in a lukewarm and indolent manner. According to Holy Scripture, "It is better that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay" (Ecclesiastes 5:5). Elsewhere it is said: "Cursed is the man that doeth the works of the Lord carelessly" (Jeremiah 31:10). For this reason, you should first learn the reason why you renounced life in the world; only if you understand this properly will you be able to learn what you need to do.

The renunciation of the world is nothing other than a vow of sacrifice, which is symbolized by the Cross, and of death. Know, then, that from this very day you have died and that the world has been crucified to you, just as you have been to the world, as the Apostle says; and learn even better what is the power of crucifixion, since it is no longer you

that live, but He Who was crucified for you lives in you. It is by this symbol and sign, by which the Master was suspended for the sake of us all, that we must live perfectly in this world, as the Blessed David prays when he begs that his flesh be crucified by the fear of God (Psalm 118:120).

For just as he who has his body nailed on a tree cannot move himself to do whatever task he wants, so he who holds his mind captive to the fear of God cannot move himself to carry out the various carnal desires. Just as he who is nailed to a cross does not think any more about present realities and is neither enticed by his volitions, nor agitated by desires, nor tormented by the concern to acquire wealth, nor puffed up with pride, nor inflamed by envy and contentiousness—just as he is not pained by the outrages of this world and does not think about the insults and attacks he has experienced (for he is waiting, after a short time, to depart from this world by death on a cross), so he who has genuinely renounced the world and is nailed to Divine fear, as to a cross, and daily awaits his departure from this world, has immobilized and made dead all his desires and carnal dispositions.

Beware, then, lest you wish to take with you something of what you threw away when you renounced the world. For in accordance with the judgment of the Master, Who says, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God" (St. Luke 9:62), he who descends again from his sublime way of life to the lowly and earthly affairs of this world does so against the commandment of God, and is like one who descends from the roof and tries to take something from a house.

Beware lest again you arouse pride against yourself, which you trod underfoot at the outset with the ardor of humility, on account of something that you learned from the *Psalter,* or some small passage that you learned from Holy Scripture; for in that case, according to the words of the Apostle, you will show yourself to be a transgressor (Galatians 2:18), insofar as you build up again the things that you had previously torn down. It is better that you preserve to the end the humility which you confessed before God and the Angels at the outset.

Likewise, take care to increase the patience which you displayed in being accepted into the monastery by waiting for many days outside the door and beseeching us with tears. For it would indeed be a pitiful situation if, while you should be adding new zeal every day to your initial fervent zeal and proceeding towards perfection, you were to detract from it and return once more to the world down below. It is not he who

has begun to do what is good who is blessed, but he who has remained steadfast in goodness until the end; for the serpent who crawls on the ground is always dogging our heels, that is, contemplating how to prepare some evil for us at the moment of our death, and he tries to overwhelm us until the very end of our lives. For precisely this reason, it is of no help to us if we but make a good beginning; nor will our initial withdrawal from the world and our initial fervor do us any good, if our end is not commensurate with them. Similarly, the humility which you have now promised for the sake of Christ will not be made secure unless you exhibit it until the end.

If, then, in accordance with Holy Scripture, you came to the monastery truly to serve God, prepare your heart, not for comforts and delights, but for temptations and afflictions. For we must enter the Kingdom of Heaven through many afflictions, and "narrow" and afflicted "is the way which leadeth to life, and few there be that find it" (St. Matthew 7:14). Pay attention to the few and the good, and be sure to regulate your life according to their example; pay no attention to the lazy and those who despise that example, however many they may be. For as the Lord says: "Many are called, but few are chosen" (St. Matthew 22:14). Let us also keep in mind that the flock to which it was the Lord's good pleasure to give His Kingdom is small (St. Luke 12:32). Do not think that it is any small sin for you to vow perfection and yet follow the example of the negligent and the indolent.

G. From Abba Isaac

A monk is he who abides far from the world and unceasingly beseeches God that he might enjoy the good things to come. The wealth of a monk is the consolation which proceeds from mourning [*penthos—Trans.*] and the joy that is born of faith, which shines in the depths of his soul. The disposition of mourning is experienced by the soul of him who passes all the days of his life in hunger and thirst, because he hopes in the good things that await him. For God inundates with His sweet consolation the man who hungers for Him; and he who goes through his life naked for God's sake is clothed by God with the garment of glory, which makes him incorruptible.

The monk should be a beneficial example for all who see his way of life. Above all, he should be distinguished by his disdain for visible, material goods and by being truly poor, for completely disdaining his flesh, for fasting with strictness and tenacity, and for preserving absolute

chastity. He should live in silence, maintaining vigil over his senses and keeping them well-disciplined; he should make himself a stranger to all contentiousness and not give way to anger; he should be concise in speech, having no remembrance of wrongs at all; he should be simple, but also discerning, showing contempt for the present life and a longing for the future life. He should be removed from the world and worldly people, and from all who are outside his monastery, and should not wish to be known by them; nor should he be bound by friendship with them or keep company with any of them; nor should he inquire into their affairs or stoop to hearing about them.

A monk should not love the honors of men; nor should he take pleasure in receiving gifts, but should keep the place where he lives in silence and unknown to the majority of people. He should devote himself to prayers and give heed to, and meditate upon, the true and blissful realm (that is, the Kingdom of Heaven). Let the monk's face be always serious, furrowed, and bedewed with tears, day and night.

These are, as concisely as possible, the virtues of the monk, which will prove that he has totally died to the world and drawn near to God. Let him who is concerned about his spiritual life, then, examine attentively whether he is deficient in any of the points enumerated above; and if he finds that he does fall short, let him realize that the name "monk" does not befit him. When he acquires all the virtues that I have mentioned, then God will allow him to come to know the remainder, which I did not cite; and when he has become the reason for other men to glorify God, already before he departs from this life he will have prepared a place of rest for his soul.

H. From St. Maximos

1. When Holy Scripture speaks of the world, it has material things in mind; consequently, worldly people are those who occupy their minds with these things, and Scripture tells them somewhat reproachfully: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of God, but is of the world" (I St. John 2:15-16), and so on.

2. A monk is one who has separated his mind from material things and who, through continence, love, psalmody, and prayer, stands steadfastly next to God.

3. O monk, take care that no one should beguile you into believing that it is possible to be saved while you are still enslaved to pleasure and vainglory.

4. The accomplishments of people in the world are the cause of falls for monks; and the accomplishments of monks bring about falls for those in the world. For example, worldly accomplishments are wealth, glory, power, luxury, beautiful bodies, fine children, and every such thing; but when a monk pursues these things, he is lost. Now the accomplishments of the monk are poverty, avoidance of glory, humility, weakness, continence, hardships, and every like thing. But whenever he who loves the world is reduced to this state, contrary to his intention, he considers it to be the greatest fall and often runs the risk of hanging himself—and some people have actually had recourse to this.

5. He who succeeds in renouncing worldly things, such as a wife, money, and the like, has made only the outer man a monk, but not yet the inner man. However, he who succeeds in overcoming his passionate thoughts has, by this, made his inner man—which is the spiritual mind—a monk. Anyone can easily make the outer man a monk, provided he is willing; but struggle is needed for one to make the inner man a monk.

6. Is there anyone, I wonder, in this generation who has completely delivered himself from passionate thoughts and been deemed worthy to engage unceasingly in pure and immaterial prayer? This is precisely the mark of the inner monk.

7. Many passions lie hidden in our souls; they are only revealed when the things that feed and arouse these passions are brought to light.

I. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba John the Cilician, Abbot of the Monastery of Rhaïthou ,** told the brothers the following:

"My children, just as we fled from the world, so let our minds flee from the desires of the flesh; for a true monk is he who has been delivered from these desires.

"Let us consider our Fathers and with what hardship and silence they remained here, and let us imitate them; let us not defile this place

which they cleansed of demons and sanctified. Let us mark well that this place is a place of ascetics and not of traders, and let us live worthy lives.

"Know this as well: that if you wish to follow the Fathers and to keep God's commandments, God will send His Grace and will preserve this place; but if you do not keep them, then you will not remain in this place. We have dwelled here, keeping God's commandments and observing the instructions of the Fathers, believing that, after their departure to the Lord, they remained with us and kept an eye on all our doings. Do this yourselves, and you will be delivered from all evils."

2. An Elder from the Thebaid related the following: "I was the son of a pagan priest. One day, when I was still a small boy, I saw my father entering the idolatrous temple to perform a sacrifice, and I entered behind him. I saw Satan sitting there, with his entire army around him. At one point, one of his commanders approached him and bowed. Satan said to him: 'Where have you come from?' 'I was in this country,' he replied, 'and I instigated wars among the inhabitants and provoked much bloodshed; and now I have come to report it to you.' 'How much time did you take to bring this about?' asked Satan. 'Thirty days.' As soon as Satan heard this answer, he ordered him to be flogged, saying: 'This is the only thing you accomplished during that time?'

"After him, another commander approached Satan in the same way and said to him: 'I was in the sea and I stirred up winds, sank ships, and killed many men; so I came to report it to you.' When Satan asked him how much time he had taken to accomplish this, and learned that it was twenty days, he ordered him to be flogged like the first, because he had accomplished nothing else in that space of time. After him came another, who reported that in one city, while a wedding was taking place, he provoked a fight between the men, with much bloodshed, and even succeeded in having the bridegroom and the bride killed. He said that he had achieved this in ten days. But he, like his predecessors, was found guilty of procrastination and was flogged.

"After they had been flogged, yet another demon came into their midst. Satan then asked him: 'And you, where are you coming from?' 'I was in the desert,' he answered, 'and for forty whole years I waged war against a single monk. Just this night I defeated him and he fell into the sin of fornication.'

"Scarcely had Satan heard of this feat than he arose, kissed the demon, took the crown off his own head, and placed it on the head of

the victorious demon; after they had brought a throne and put it near him, Satan made the demon sit on it beside him, joyfully telling him: 'Bravo! How were you able to do such a great deed?'

"When I saw all these things," said the Elder from the Thebaid, "I realized how great in dignity is the rank of the monk and how much it frightens the demons. Without delay, I departed from the idolatrous temple, and by the Grace of God I became a monk."

J. From St. Ephraim

Brethren, we can measure the time that we have passed in the monastic life; but if we are not aware of the negligence we have exhibited during this span of time, we are becoming conceited. Praise for a man is not just based on the length of time he has spent in asceticism, but on the progress he has made according to God; and by this is meant not the whiteness of one's hair, but the attainment of a virtuous life.

Be sure, O monk, that you obtain the eternal life to which you were called and for the sake of which you made a good confession before all creation on high and below; "be patient for a little season, and He will surely come, and will not tarry" [*cf.* Isaiah 26:20; Habbakuk 2:3]. What is a monk? Or what is he like?

The monk is like a man who falls from a height but, falling, finds a rope hanging from a beam; seizing it, he hangs onto it, and thereafter cries unceasingly to the Lord to help him, since he knows that if he grows weary and lets his two hands slacken their grip, he will fall and be killed.

Beloved brethren, since we wear the Angelic *schema*, let us not fight on the Devil's side, but let us aspire as far as possible to the life of the Angels. For the habit must be accompanied by a way of life and by deeds; without deeds, the *schema* is of no value. Do the Angels perchance dwell in Heaven amidst quarreling and jealousy, as we see happening, nowadays, among monks?

Let us make sure, brethren, that we do not become an impediment and a scandal to those in the world; let the good *schema* not be blasphemed because of us, but let it rather be praised. What defense will we make before the Lord at the fearful hour of Judgment, if we are so careless about our salvation? What should God have done for us that He has not done? Have we not seen God the Word Himself humbled, in the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7), that we ourselves might become humble? And have we not seen His ineffable face spat upon, that we

might not get angry when we are insulted or when we are rebuked?

Have we not seen His holy back scourged, that we might be obedient in all things before our Abbots and the other monks? Have we not seen His face, which makes the earth tremble when He looks upon it (Psalm 103:32), slapped, that we might endure whenever we are attacked, and not become like wild beasts? Did we perhaps not hear Him say, "I do nothing of Myself," and again, "I came not to do My will, but the will of the Father Who sent Me" [*cf.* St. John 5:30-31], that we might not be impudent and self-willed? Did we perhaps not hear Him say: I do not disobey nor gainsay, "and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart" (St. Matthew 11:29); and again: "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (St. Matthew 20:28); and further saying many similar things, that we might strive to be like this?

It is impossible for us to prosper and be saved in any other way than by imitating Christ in all things. I beseech you, my brethren, the chosen flock of Christ, let us be vigilant while we have the time and let us conduct ourselves in conformity with the habit that we wear, so that hereafter we might receive the honor of Angels.

* The Israelites who left Egypt were reckoned as sixty groups of ten thousand men, not counting women and children.

** Rhaïthou [sometimes, "Rhaithou," "Raïthou," or "Raithou"—*Trans.*] is situated in that place where, as Divine Scripture notes in the Book of Exodus, there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees. In the Byzantine period, this place was called "Elana," and the Turks today call it "Rhaïthou " and the Arabs "el-Tor" [or "El Tor"—*Trans.*]. It is the rocky part of Arabia, and as well as bordering on the prosperous part of Arabia, it is situated about sixty miles from Mt. Sinai. A large number of Hesychast Fathers were slain in Rhaïthou by the Blemmyes (see the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. I, p. 281).

Hypothesis XXXIII

The faithful monk should eagerly accept whatever his spiritual Father suggests to him, because all such suggestions are in his interest, even if they induce distress or are arduous; for mercy is given by God for this purpose and for the alleviation of afflictions.

A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

One day, the successor of St. Honoratus as Abbot of the monastery was overcome by such great anger against Libertinus, who was beloved of God, that he came to the point of striking him with his fists; and when he did not find a stick to lash him with, he picked up a stool and smote him on the head and on the face with it so forcibly, that he made them both black and blue and swollen. After this violent beating, Libertinus went off to his bed, where he remained in silence. In the meantime, he had been assigned some task at the monastery for the following day. After the morning service was over, Libertinus went to the Abbot's cell and in all humility asked for his blessing.

The Abbot, though he knew how much Libertinus was honored and loved by all for his exceeding virtue, thought that he wanted to leave the monastery, on account of his attack on him; he therefore asked him where he was going to go. "Father," replied Libertinus calmly, "I have been assigned a task at the monastery, which I cannot abandon, because yesterday I resolved to stay here." The Abbot realized that he had behaved harshly to Libertinus, and he also saw the monk's humility and meekness. He groaned within his heart and rose from his bed, fell at the feet of his disciple, held onto them reverently, and confessed that he had sinned by daring to cause such severe pain to so excellent a man. In reaction, Libertinus fell to the ground before the Abbot's feet, maintaining that what had happened was not due to him (that is, the Abbot), but to his own sin; he considered himself responsible and declared that what he had suffered was worthy of his errors. In the wake of this incident, the Abbot acquired great meekness, and the humility of the disciple became a guide to virtue for the teacher.

After he had been given permission, Libertinus went to carry out

his assignment. Then, many of those who knew him, kind and venerable men, on seeing his face blackened and swollen, asked him what had happened. "Yesterday evening," he replied, "because of my sins, I stumbled over a stool and suffered what you see." In this way, that righteous man neither revealed the Abbot's anger nor fell into the sin of lying.

Such, I believe, is the power of patience, Peter, that it is much greater than the miracle and signs that this great man (Libertinus) wrought.

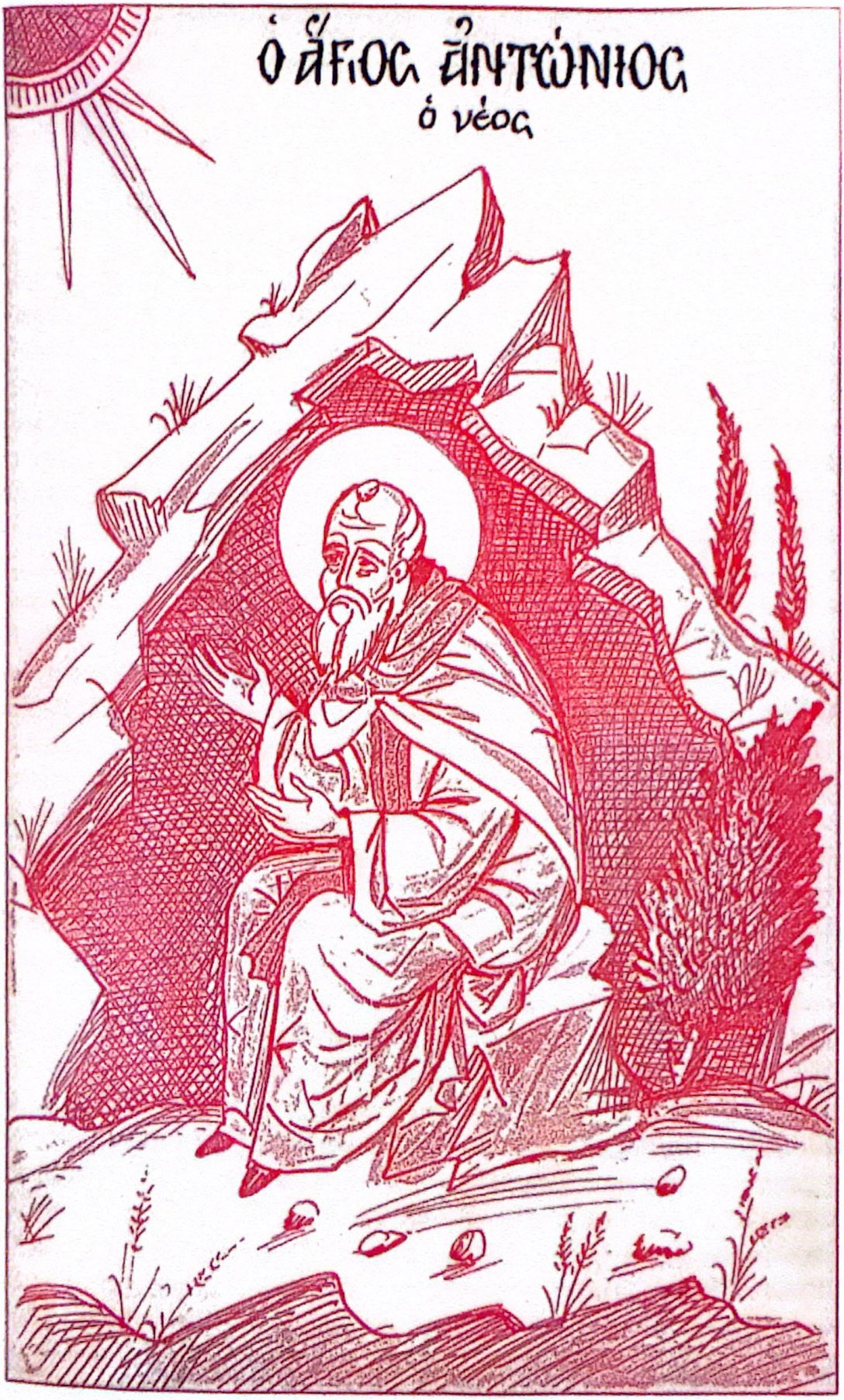
B. From the Life of St. Pachomios

When Pachomios the Great was still a young man and a disciple of St. Palamon, he did obedience to his teacher eagerly and without contradicting him, following him with humility of heart in all of his incomparable and admirable acts of austerity. Apart from other hardships (to which he willingly submitted), he was often sent to a hill to gather wood. Since he used to walk barefoot, the thorns would pierce his feet like nails; but he endured this ordeal with joy, remembering the nails with which they affixed our Savior's hands and feet to the Cross.

C. From the Life of St. Anthony the New (from the Age of the Iconoclasts)

This venerable Father Anthony came to the monastic life after having previously been a dignitary and dedicated himself for many years, all on his own and in silence, to the severest struggles. He was once reading the *Divine Ladder* of the virtues,* when he noticed at the end a discourse concerning obedience, which is spoken by the teacher: "If a man spends his life in ascetical quietude and, recognizing his infirmity, hastens to sell himself as a slave in obedience to an Elder, whereas he was before blind, he now suddenly beholds Christ without effort." He continually turned this sentence over in his mind, saying to himself: "After so many toils and ascetical struggles, am I still blind? How long must I wait to behold Christ?" Under the influence of these thoughts, he abandoned his solitary hut and eremitical life and entered the arena of cœnobitic monasticism.

He went to a renowned *cœnobion* in the vicinity of Kios, in Bithynia [now Gemlik, in Western Turkey—*Trans.*], and stayed in the monastery's guest-house, like one of the poor, without saying anything to anyone. But since he was fed daily for free, along with the paupers, he became distressed, for he could not abide eating bread at no charge. So he went



St. Anthony the New

up to the neighboring hill, gathered firewood, carried it back on his shoulders, and deposited it next to the entrance of the monastery. The monk whose duty it was to look after guests saw this deed and said to him: "Abba, what are you doing? The monastery has no need for you to work; all who come here are fed for free and give thanks to God." "I know this," replied Anthony," but since I do not like remaining idle, I am doing this on my own to get some relaxation." When Anthony persisted in doing this favor voluntarily, the guest master, without saying anything, referred the matter to the Abbot. At that time, the Abbot was the famous Ignatios, who had built the monastery with the Lord's help.

The Abbot listened to the guest master and said to him: "Ask him what he is looking for and why he is waiting patiently outside the monastery." When the guest master had conveyed the Abbot's question to Anthony, the latter responded: "I am not from here; I am a foreigner and I wish, with God's help, to live with you, so that I might be of service to you." As soon as the Abbot had been informed of this reply, he ordered Anthony to come to see him. When he saw Anthony, he immediately recognized who he was (for he knew of his virtuous life by hearsay), and he said to him: "Abba, what troubled you so much that you came to us?" "I came to become like you in virtue," replied Abba Anthony, " since up to now I have been lagging behind you in this regard."

"It is not possible for you now to become a disciple [*hypotaktikos—Trans.*], since you have lived for so many years on your own, with God. For many," the Abbot continued, "who have deprived themselves by their own will have succeeded in acquiring whichever of the other virtues they set out to acquire, such as continence, fasting, poverty, and bodily hardship. However, they proved to be mediocre even in what they seemed to be good at, when they were tested by the standard of cœnobitic monasticism, since they lacked humility."

"This, Father, is precisely what I learned from the Divinely-inspired teaching of the Fathers, namely, that I have not yet succeeded in crossing over the threshold of virtue as a hermit, and I have come here and delivered myself into spiritual servitude, so that with your help, as Christ wills, I may begin a life that is guided by you."

After this confession, Anthony was accepted into the monastery and was instructed by the Abbot to make caring for the Church his priority (this is something that most men avoid as being very burdensome and arduous). After he had remained in this duty for a sufficient time, and not being satiated by the hardship that resulted from this obedience, he

approached the Abbot one day and said: "Father, I came here in order to labor more, but the duty that you have assigned me is too light for me."

As soon as he heard this, the Abbot handed him over to the monk in charge of looking after the vineyards, so that he might prune them together with the rest of the brothers. But since he was completely inexperienced in this work, he kept injuring his fingers, and for this reason he was distressed by this obedience. Nonetheless, he endured the hardship throughout the duration of the pruning. But when the time came for ploughing the vineyards, again he had great difficulty with digging. Finally, when the grapes had ripened, they gave him the task of protecting them.

Some of the brothers, either because they were rather careless, or perhaps in order to test him, came to the vineyard and asked if they could cut off some grapes. Abba Anthony told them: "Forgive me, my brothers, but I do not have any such instructions; look, there are the branches in front of you, and if you wish, cut them on your own; but in any case, if you take them, I must report this to the Abbot." Indeed, Abba Anthony, like the others, used to confess his thoughts daily to the Abbot. As soon as they heard this, the brothers departed empty-handed.

In the meantime, he conversed with himself in more or less the following way. While sitting in his cell at midday and picking lice from his clothing, he said to himself, in response to his thoughts: "When I was keeping silence alone in the desert, you said to me, 'You derive no benefit from all the hardship you endure,' and you determined that my ascetic seclusion was of no value. Now that you have brought me here, you seem to reckon the toils of that solitary life to be happy, since you want to tear me away from the cœnobitic life of the brethren." He entertained these thoughts many times with pain of heart, and talked tearfully to himself. One of the spiritual Elders often noticed this going on, and he consoled him with warm words of love. In this way Anthony bore with such temptations, so as to enjoy the good things to come.

After the grape harvest had passed, he was assigned to serving in the refectory. There he had even more difficulty, because until nearly the third hour of the night,** he was occupied with receiving and looking after the brothers, as they came in and went out. They frequently showered him with insults and inappropriate remarks, as often happens in such circumstances. After he had been trained in these duties for a considerable time, his cloak and shoes wore out. He had been given these to wear at the persistent entreaty of the Blessed Bishop Paul, be-

cause during the entire period before he entered the monastic life, he would walk about unshod.

As I said, since his clothes and shoes had worn out and winter had arrived, he was now freezing from the cold. Up to that point, the Abbot had been putting off giving him the clothing necessary to cover his body. He did this in order to test him, to benefit the lazy, and to insure a greater reward for Anthony. This is why his feet were chapped from walking on the marble and caused him much pain. Seeing how much Anthony was forcing himself, and how much need he was in, the brothers felt sorry for him, and one threw him a skin, while another gave him shoes to wear, which, however, the struggler refused to accept. Looking to the judgment of the Abbot, he said to the brothers: "I am aware that our Father knows what things I am short of and of what I have need. I leave it to him, then, to provide me with them, as God informs him, for the sake of my humiliation."

Meanwhile, winter passed and summer followed spring, and he still remained neglected. Overcome by the siege of his inner thoughts and his outer shortages, he went to his instructor—that is, the Abbot—and said to him: "Master, if the monastery cannot provide me what I need, then let me satisfy my needs with the gifts of friends."

Then this good pastor, having brought Anthony to the point he was aiming at, replied to him: "My monastery, with the help of Christ, feeds the entire region; will it not be capable of supplying you with clothing and shoes? Some time ago, I was informed that you are a struggler and endure physical ordeals; but now I do not see in you any of the things that I heard. You abandoned all that you had in the world out of love for God, and subjected yourself to ascetical labors and poverty. You lived well in the ascetical stillness of the desert for quite a number of years, enduring physical privations. But now that you have come to us, you have been faint-hearted and impatient in these small exercises. Are you asking for comforts, as if you are one of the more careless brothers, who do not look with assurance to the great recompense of Christ?" Having humbled Anthony, the Abbot let him go, without giving him a chance to defend himself.

After this athlete of Christ, Anthony, had received such scathing criticisms, he continued to endure the afflictions that came from God and with tear-filled eyes daily pursued inner purity in other ways, by means of bodily continence. For he was permitted by the Abbot to fast and struggle as he wished, lest it should appear that he had been removed from his previous way of life in the stillness of the desert. For this rea-

son, he did not allow himself to sleep on a bed, but, stretched out a little on a chair he built, slept for a very brief period and woke up again before ringing the *talanton*. He prayed, read verses from the *Psalter*, and continually enjoyed the good things of the soul.

Since the Abbot and the brethren thought that Anthony had attained great patience, the monastery's farmers took him and gave him a hoe, with the instruction that he root out and cut down weeds and bushes. Drenched with sweat and worn out, he sighed to God from the depths of his heart: "Look upon my lowliness and my toil, and forgive all my sins" (Psalm 24:18). One night in his sleep, he saw a distinguished and radiant man, who was holding a set of scales. It appeared that all of his sins, from his youth, had been placed in the left pan of this set of scales; in the other pan had been placed the hoe from his labors for God, which weighed down and wiped away all the forms of his sins. That distinguished man then addressed himself to Anthony, saying to him: "Behold, God has accepted your labors and forgiven your sins."

After a while, the Abbot, having seen Anthony's long-lasting patience and seeing that he had been sufficiently tested by the arduous struggles of submission and that he had set his mind to endure magnanimously for God's sake whatever might be required of him, summoned him and said to him privately: "Father, may God give you the reward for the souls that have benefited from your coming to our monastery and from your God-pleasing life; for never have my disciples been so greatly benefited as by your God-sent presence and perfect obedience." As he said these words, he took a cloak, shoes, and other similar articles of clothing from the wardrobe and offered them to Anthony. From that time on, he had whatever all the monks had; that is, all of the items requisite for his physical needs. Indeed, as soon as the Abbot perceived that he was lacking something, he would place it secretly on Anthony's bed, and when Anthony returned, he would find it.

D. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Arsenios said to Abba Alexander: "When you have finished splitting your palm branches, come and eat with me; but if guests come, eat with them."

So Abba Alexander worked attentively and quietly, without hurrying himself. Now, when it came time to eat, he still had some palm branches left. When Abba Arsenios saw that Abba Alexander was late, he ate, since he thought that there surely must have been visitors.

Later on in the evening, Abba Alexander showed up, and the Elder asked him: "Did you have guests?" "No," he replied. "Why, then, did you not come when it was time to eat?" Abba Arsenios asked a second time. "Because you told me: 'Come when you have finished splitting your palm-branches.' I carried out your commandment and did not come earlier, because I only just now finished."

When Abba Arsenios heard this, he marvelled at the scrupulosity of Abba Alexander and said to him: "You should eat more often, so that you can perform your prayer rule, and you should drink water, or otherwise your body will quickly become sick."

2. Abba Abraham once visited Abba Ares. While they were sitting down, a brother came to the Elder and said to him: "Tell me, please, what must I do to be saved?" "Go," replied the Elder, "and sit in your cell for a year, eating bread and salt every evening, and afterwards come back, and I will tell you."

The brother actually departed and did as he had been advised. After a year, the brother returned; it so happened that Abba Abraham was there. The Elder told the brother again: "Go and fast this year as well, eating every two days."

When the brother had departed, Abba Abraham asked Abba Ares: "Why, when you speak to all of the other brothers, do you put them under a light yoke, while you load this brother with heavy burdens?"

"I respond to the brothers who come according to what they ask of me. But this one, here, is a true struggler, and he comes to hear God; and he carries out whatever I tell him diligently and precisely. That is why I speak the word of God to him."

3. The following incident is told about Abba John the Short. He once visited an Elder who lived in a skete of the Thebaid.*** He took up residence near him in the desert. It was said of Abba John that his spiritual Father once took a dry stick and planted it in the ground. "Water it every day with a pitcher of water," he told John, "until it bears fruit." The water was so far away from the cells, that one had to set out the evening before, in order to return in the morning.

After three years, the dry stick budded and produced walnuts. Then the spiritual Father of this obedient disciple took the nuts, brought them into the Church of the skete, and said to the brethren: "Take and eat of the fruit of obedience."

4. One time a man came from the ascetics of the Thebaid to Abba Sisoes, wishing to become a monk. The Elder asked him: "Do you have anyone in the world?" "I have a son," he replied. "Then go and throw him into the river, and then come and be a monk." The man went off to carry out the order of Abba Sisoes. In the meantime, however, the Elder sent another monk behind him to prevent him, if in fact he should attempt to do this.

When he was preparing to throw his son into the river, the brother who was to prevent him from doing so ran up to him. "Leave me alone," he protested, "the Abba told me to throw him into the river." "But the same Abba," replied the brother, "instructs you, by way of me, not to throw him in." He then left the boy and returned to the Elder, and became a novice monk.

This story is similar to that of Patermouthios, which Abba Cassian related.

5. One of the Fathers recounted the following story: An educated and pious man from Theoupolis**** regularly visited a certain recluse,***** begging him to accept him and to make him a monk.

"Go and sell your possessions," the Elder told him, "and distribute them to the poor, as the Lord commands, and when you return, I will accept you." That pious man went off and, after doing as he had been instructed by the recluse, returned. "Now you must keep yet another commandment," the recluse said to him: "Do not speak."

The man agreed to this and remained five whole years with the recluse, without saying even a word. All those who knew him began to praise him. As soon as the recluse learned of this, he said to him: "My son, you are no longer deriving any benefit from being here; for this reason, I shall send you to a *cœnobion* in Egypt." And so he sent him on his way. But when he was leaving, the recluse did not tell the man either to speak or not to speak. Preferring to keep his obedience, he resided at the *cœnobion* without speaking.

The Abbot of the *cœnobion* that took him in wanted to find out for himself whether the man was naturally mute. So he sent him off to do a task which required him to cross a river,• which was at the time flooding, knowing that the brother would have to return to the *cœnobion* and say that he had been unable to cross it.

No sooner had that pious monk approached the river and seen it flooding, than he fell to his knees; and at once there came along a crocodile, which took him on its back and carried him across to the opposite

shore. Meanwhile, the Abbot sent a monk behind the brother, to see what he would do. As soon as the monk saw this amazing sight, he returned and reported it to the Abbot and to the brethren, who were astonished when they heard it.

After a period of time, the monk died, and the Abbot informed the recluse who had sent him: "Although the one you sent us did not have a voice, he was an Angel of God." The recluse then replied to the Abbot: "He was not mute by nature; however, he did not speak because of a commandment that I gave him when he came to me for the first time." When the monks in the *cœnobion* heard of this exploit, they marveled and glorified God.

6. An Elder had a disciple whom he had ransomed and who did perfect obedience to him. One day, the Elder said to him: "Go light the oven well, take the book that we are reading in the *synaxis*, and throw it into the oven." The disciple did exactly as the Elder had directed him, without any objection. As soon as he had thrown the book into the oven, the oven went out.

7. The Elders said that if one has trust in someone and is completely subject to him, he no longer needs to heed the commandments of God, but should submit his wishes to his spiritual Father; and he will not have sin before God. For God seeks nothing else from beginners than the trial of obedience.

8. A brother who was going from the skete to reap in the fields went to a well-known Elder and asked him: "Tell me, Abba, what should I do now that I am going to the harvest?" "If I tell you, will you obey?" the Elder replied. "Yes, I will obey you." "Then," the Elder continued, "as long as you are disposed to obey, abandon this harvest, return to your cell, and shut yourself up there for fifty days, eating only bread and salt every evening; after that, come to me and I will tell you what else you should do."

The brother returned and did as he was instructed; after fifty days he visited the Elder again. The Elder, knowing that the brother was a struggler, gave him directions on how to live in his cell. So he threw himself to the ground, face first, and wept before God for three days. His thoughts then said to him: "You have now scaled the heights, you have become great." At that moment, the brother called to mind his sins and said to himself: "Where are all my sins?" After he had enumerated

his sins one by one, his thoughts changed their tactics and said to him: "You have committed many sins and you cannot be saved." But the brother replied: "I will say a few prayers before God, and I believe that in His boundless compassion He will have mercy on me."

After he had warred, and been warred upon, for a long time in this manner, the evil spirits were finally defeated, and they appeared before him visibly and said to him: "You have conquered us." "Why?" asked the brother. The evil spirits answered: "If we exalt you, you hasten to humble yourself; but if we humble you, then you raise yourself up high." They disappeared after the brother had rebuked them.

9. Once a worldly man who had three sons left them in the city and went off to a monastery. After staying for three years in the monastery, he began to be bothered by thoughts that reminded him of his sons and awoke in him a longing for them. As a result, he experienced great grief over his sons. He had not said anything to the Abbot of the monastery at the outset, when he entered, about the fact that he had children.

When the Abbot saw that the man was frequently distressed, he asked him one day: "What is the matter with you, that you are so gloomy?" "I have three sons in the world," replied the monk, "and I want to bring them to the monastery." The Abbot gave him leave to do so.

The brother returned to the city; two of his sons had died in the meantime, and only one remained alive. He took him along and returned at once to the monastery. He looked for the Abbot and found him in the bakery, where he presented his son to him. The Abbot then embraced and kissed the boy, while saying to his father: "Do you love your son?" "I certainly do," answered the father. "Then take him and throw him into the oven that is now burning." The brother immediately took his son with his own hands and threw him into the oven. And (oh, the wonder!) at once the fire of the oven became dew and it did not burn the boy. His father won the same glory that the Patriarch Abraham had.

10. An Elder said: "The Savior had affliction and distress from the outset of His teachings; he who avoids such at the beginning does not come to know God. That is, just as we make sure at the beginning of their education that children know their letters, in order that they might gain knowledge, so also, when a monk is obedient, in spite of his labors and afflictions, he proves to be a fellow-heir of God and a son of God."

11. Abba Poimen, on hearing all that was said about Abba Nisthero, who was young and lived in a *cœnobion,* wished to see him. He disclosed this desire to the latter's Abbot and begged him to send him to him. Indeed, when he arrived, in the company of the Steward of his monastery, the Elder asked: "Abba Nisthero, whence did you acquire this virtue, such that whenever an affliction befalls the *cœnobion,* you neither speak nor intercede?"

Since the brother was being hard pressed by the Elder for an answer, he replied: "Forgive me, Abba; when I first entered the monastery, I said in my mind: 'You and the ass are the same thing; just as the ass, when beaten, does not speak, and, when insulted, does not reply, let it be so with you'; as the Psalmist says, 'I became as a beast before Thee, yet I am ever with Thee' (Psalm 72:22)."

12. Abba Poimen said: "A man who lives with another person should be like a marble column; when insulted, he should not get angry; and when praised, he should not be puffed up with pride."

13. Concerning the young John of Thebes, the disciple of Abba Ammoes, the following story is told. For twelve years, he served the needs of a sick Elder and stayed with him in a ravine; for all that, the Elder mistreated him and, although John labored very hard for him, the Elder never once greeted him with, "May you be saved." When this Elder was about to die, and the other Elders were sitting around him, he held young John's hand and said to him the words: "May you be saved, may you be saved, may you be saved." He then turned him over to the Elders, saying to them: "This one, here, is an Angel, not a man."

14. One of the Fathers begged God to inform him to what measure of virtue he had attained. God revealed to him that in such and such a *cœnobion,* "there is a brother who is better than you." The Elder immediately set out to go to the *cœnobion.* When the Abbot and the Elders of the monastery heard this, they went to meet him, for he was a great and renowned monk. After entering the *cœnobion,* the Elder said to them: "I wish to see all the brothers and greet them." At the Abbot's order, all of the brothers came, with the exception of the one about whom God had informed the Elder. "Is there not another brother in the monastery?" asked the Elder. "Yes, there is one other," replied the Abbot, "but he is spiritually retarded and busy with the garden." "Summon him," said the Elder.

So they summoned him, and when the Elder saw him, he got up from his seat and greeted him. Taking him aside, he asked him insistently: "What is your spiritual work? Tell me." "I am a foolish man, my Elder," he answered. After the Elder had begged him earnestly, he at length disclosed the following: "The Abbot placed in my cell with me the ox which pulls the wheel of the well; and every day it breaks the strands in the reed mat that I am working on. I have endured this now for thirty years, and I have never allowed my mind to feel any resentment against my Abbot; but neither have I ever thrashed the ox on account of the damage. I have been forbearing and re-plait the strands, giving thanks to God." When he heard this, the Elder was amazed, because from this he realized what the remainder of the brother's spiritual work was.

E. From St. Ephraim

My brother, if you are under obedience to Fathers, your unshakable faith will be apparent from this: not in their lavishing attention on you and in your hearing sweet and gentle words, but in your showing endurance when they strike you and insult you; for even a wild beast becomes tame and meek when you flatter it. Do not, then, feel bitterness towards him who causes you distress, if you want to become a vessel of election, but be subject to your teacher in all things, with serenity, just as the Lord, when He became man, was subject, in humility, first to His Mother and to him who was regarded as His father, as the sacred Evangelist informs us: "And He was subject to them" (St. Luke 2:51); and then to His true Heavenly Father, to Whom "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross" (Philippians 2:8), as the Apostle says.

You should accept with gratitude the afflictions that befall you and the instructive tests of your Abbot; for, as Holy Scripture says, "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons" (Hebrews 12:8). Have your superiors beaten you? Rejoice over this and correct your fault. Now, did they beat you unjustly? Then your reward becomes much greater. For when the Apostles were preaching salvation to the world, they were beaten like criminals in various cities; and yet they did not get angry or indignant: but "they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41).

But perhaps one of the more negligent brothers will say: "I am grieved that this happened to me, after the many labors that I performed

in the monastery." To him we could say: Does this really distress you, servant of God? Understand from this that after the many years and many labors to which you appeal, you have not yet overcome your passions. For if one has the opinion that he is something, whereas he is nothing, he deceives himself like a lunatic. Just as the pilot shows his professional competence when the seas are rough, so also the monk shows what kind of monastic he is when his superiors insult and scold him; that is, whether he endures these testings with joy, as he would if he were making great profits, or is bothered and distressed by them. He who boasts that he has spent so many years in the monastic life, but presents no proofs of his labor, and has not succeeded in acquiring this holy way of life, is like one who carries around tools which he has not yet learned how to use.

Have you grown old in the monastic life? As one who is experienced in this life, you should be an example for the young, who are still inexperienced. Let all the others be astounded by your patience and your forbearance; let the Holy Spirit, Who dwells within you, also rejoice at your perseverance. You should be thankful more than everyone else, since you are suffering everything for your spiritual benefit.

I reckon that he who has assumed spiritual protection over you will not rejoice at your imperfection, because he is going to give account to the Lord for your salvation. By contrast, he will be all joy if he presents you as perfect to the Lord. This is why you are obligated to endure gratefully whatever comes from him—even if it is painful—as a means of healing, not of punishment. If you are not able to put up with a small affliction or temptation for the sake of the Lord, then how will you endure a great one? And if you cannot endure an insult, or a slap, or a blow, how will you carry the cross which you promised, right from the beginning, to bear on your shoulders? And if you do not carry your cross, how will you become an heir of heavenly glory with those who say: "All this is come upon us, yet we have not forgotten Thee, neither have we dealt unrighteously in Thy covenant" (Psalm 43:18). And again: "For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter" (Psalm 43:23).

Beloved brother, have we forgotten all that the Master of us all endured for our sake? He was insulted, beaten, and told by the Pharisees that He had a demon; and yet He did not get angry. They slapped Him, buffeted Him, mocked Him, nailed Him to the Cross, gave Him vinegar with gall to drink, and pierced His side. He endured all of this for our salvation, and yet we cannot endure a small insult for His sake? How

will we look at Him face-to-face on the Day of Judgment? What defense will we have when, along with the other benefactions He made for us, He presents these as well? And what compensation will He seek for all these? Let us come to our senses, my beloved, and when we have regained a brave and firm heart, let us say with the Apostle that we are ready, not only to be bound and beaten for Christ's sake, but even to die (Acts 21:13). For if we are ready to suffer with Him, then we will assuredly be glorified with Him, and will become fellow-heirs with Him in the Kingdom of Heaven (Romans 8:17).

* This is a reference to the book by St. John Climacos [*The Ladder of Divine Ascent*—*Trans.*].

** The twelfth hour, according to Byzantine time, is always the hour of sunset, while the third hour of the night is three hours after sunset.

*** To an Elder, that is, who lived in the Thebaid of Upper Egypt.

**** Antioch was called "Theoupolis," after its reconstruction by Justinian; it had been devastated by the Persians in 540 A.D.

***** "Recluse" (*"enkleistos"*) was the name given to monks who, for the sake of asceticism, enclosed themselves in their cells and never emerged from them. They took food through a small window.

•The river in question is the Nile, which in that era was prone to flooding.

Hypothesis XXXIV

We should be obedient to our superiors in the Lord, even unto death, and love and fear them.

A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

Once, when St. Benedict was keeping silence in his cell, his disciple, Placidus, went to "the lake"—as the locals call it—to draw water. However, the vessel with which he was going to draw the water fell from his hands and was washed away by the movement of the water. In his attempt to snatch the pitcher from the current, Placidus slipped and fell into the waters himself; he was carried off by the waters to the middle of the lake, about an arrow-shot away.

But St. Benedict, the man of God, who, as we said, was keeping silence in his cell, knew [inwardly—*Trans.*] what had happened to Placidus, and after summoning Maurus, his disciple, he said to him: "Run, Brother Maurus, because Brother Placidus has fallen into the lake, and the current of the water has carried him a long way."

On hearing the order of his spiritual Father, Maurus set off at a run, and when he reached the scene of the accident, he saw that Placidus had indeed been carried off a long way by the current of the water.

With unhesitating faith, and resting his courage on the prayers of his spiritual Father, Maurus walked onto the waters and ran, as if he were treading on dry land, until he reached Placidus, who had been carried off by the current of the waters. After grabbing him by the hair of his head, he dragged him over the water, walking in the same way, until he reached dry land. Only then did Maurus come to his senses and realize that he had been running on the water and that this feat was not his own, since it would have been completely impossible for him to achieve this, had not the prayer of his miracle-working Father supported him. He marvelled and trembled at what had occurred and, on returning to his Father, recounted to him the tremendous miracle that had happened to him.

St. Benedict did not ascribe this miracle to his own sanctity, but to the obedience of Maurus. Maurus objected that the Abbot's command had accomplished the miracle. For, he maintained, he did not feel in his

soul the power that he had when he was walking on the waters. In the meantime, the monk Placidus, who had been attentively following the God-imitating and humble speech of these two men and their affectionate dispute, intervened and said: "When I was being dragged from the deep, where the current had pulled me, to dry land, I saw above my head the cloak of my Abba (St. Benedict) and felt him pulling me from the waters."

B. From the Life of St. Theodosios the Cœnobiarch

Since the great Theodosios the Cœnobiarch knew that, for those who chose to live according to God, nothing else so contributed to their acquisition of virtue and its preservation, once they had acquired it, as the remembrance of death, what did he do? He gave permission to his disciples to dig a grave to remind them, on the one hand, of death,* and, on the other hand, to make them more persistent in spiritual struggles and to spur their zeal more strongly towards virtue; at the same time, this was done that the grave might receive them when they died. Apart from all of this, however, he had foreseen something of the future and was making provisions for it.

As soon as the grave had been prepared, St. Theodosios stood above it, with his disciples all around him. Then, foreseeing with the penetrating eye of his mind what was going to happen, he turned to the disciples and said to them, ostensibly in jest: "The grave is now ready; but who among you will be the one to inaugurate it?" In this way, Theodosios the Great concealed, by means of levity, his delight at what he foresaw.

Indeed, a certain Hieromonk named Basil, who manifestly demonstrated, in his zeal for the good and by his likeness in virtue, that he had all the Patristic marks of distinction so obvious in his spiritual Father—just as natural children show evidence of their parents in the flesh by their physical features—surmised that his teacher was not dropping a hint without some purpose. For this reason, ready and eager to be chosen for death, as if it were something not undesirable, but rather beneficial and profitable, he immediately seized the initiative and knelt before his spiritual Father, such that his head touched the ground, and said: "Bless, Father; for your sake, I will be the first to inaugurate the grave."

Basil made the request, and Theodosios granted it. Basil was then placed alive in the grave, and Father Theodosios ordered all the cus-

tomary rites for the reposed to be served for him; that is, memorial services on the third, the ninth, and, thereafter, on the fortieth day. When the period of forty days had come to an end, Basil, without feeling any pain in his head or anywhere else in his body, and without being overcome by fever of any kind, departed for the Lord as if he were sleeping a sweet and gentle sleep, receiving, for his obedience and his eagerness to pass over into eternity (a sure sign of those who take no delight in worldly things), the prized honor of being the first of the brothers to appear before God and to receive his crown.

During the ensuing forty days, at precisely the time that the hymns of Vespers were being chanted, the Divine Basil appeared amidst the sacred choir of the disciples, himself chanting as well. Theodosios the Great both saw and heard him. None of the others saw his figure, or heard him, except one Aëtios, who followed in the footsteps of his teacher and who was a disciple of Theodosios the Great, not only because he knew and related his feats, but also by virtue of desiring to imitate them; this Aëtios did not see Basil's figure, but did hear his voice. He thus asked the teacher whether he himself could hear the dead man's voice. "Not only do I hear him," replied St. Theodosios, "but I also see his figure, and if you want, I will point him out to you at the time he appears."

In fact, as the night progressed and the service came to an end, the man of God saw Basil very clearly, standing and singing with the Chanters. He then pointed him out to Aëtios with his finger, while at the same time he besought God, saying: "Open his eyes also, O Lord, that he may see this great mystery of Thy mighty works." Seeing Basil, Aëtios recognized him and ran to him, desiring to embrace him. But at that moment Basil not only became untouchable, but also disappeared, after having said only this, within the hearing of all: "May you be saved, my Fathers and Brothers, may you be saved. You will no longer see me." In this way, what the Lord said in the Gospel is proved to be most true and most trustworthy: "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (St. John 11:25).

C. From the Life of St. Theodora

Near the monastery where the Blessed Theodora led her ascetic life, there was a lake. In this lake lurked a crocodile, which immediately devoured whatever came close to it, whether man or small or large animal. So dangerous did this evil become for those who lived in the vicinity

that Gregory, the Prefect of Alexandria, stationed soldiers in that place, to prevent the wayfarers who used to pass through there from approaching the lake.

Knowing well the kind of life Theodora led—that it fell only a little short of being a match for that of the Angels, and that as a result of this Theodora would not be lacking her share in Divine Grace—the Abbot of the monastery sent for her: "Theodore, my child," he said to her (for she lived in the monastery as a man), "take the pitcher and go and fetch us water from the lake near here."

Theodora, who was familiar with the Apostolic injunction that we should obey those who have rule over us (Hebrews 13:17), hastened to carry out this order. Although many urged her to flee from that place, because she would otherwise be killed by the beast, resting her courage on her faith in God and putting into practice the work of obedience, which only brings life and never causes death, she evaded all who were impeding her and entered the lake. There (oh, Thy wondrous works, O Lord!) they saw the beast carrying her on its back and saw her taking water and filling the pitcher that she was holding in her hands; and when she had finished, they saw her coming back again to dry land on the beast's back. In this way, Theodora was brought safely to dry land, without suffering anything; but the beast, after it had been rebuked by Theodora, paid the just penalty for all that it had done hitherto and fell dead on the spot.

This event was very quickly spread around to others—by those who had seen it with their own eyes and wanted to gladden those who had not—and all gave thanks to God for Theodora's accomplishment.

D. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Isidore said that novices should love their true Teachers as their fathers and fear them as rulers; and that they should never set aside fear, out of love, or blacken their love with fear.

2. It was said of John, the disciple of Abba Paul, that he had great obedience. In a neighboring place there were tombs, and among them there lived a hyena.** The Elder saw wild onions growing in that area and told John to go to fetch them some.

"What should I do about the hyena, Abba?" asked John. "If it attacks you," replied the Elder in jest, "tie it up and bring it here." So John went to that place later on, towards evening; and, lo and behold, the

hyena flung itself at him. In accordance with his Elder's direction, he rushed to catch it, but the hyena escaped. As he pursued it, John said: "My Abba told me to tie you up." And having caught it, he bound it.

Meanwhile, the Elder was concerned about John's lateness, and he sat outside his cell waiting for him. And behold, along came John, holding the bound hyena. As soon as he saw him, the Elder was amazed. However, wanting to humble him, he beat him and said: "You dolt, have you brought me a mongrel?" The Elder untied the animal and let it go.

3. The Blessed Seridos, who maintained a *cœnobion* in Thanatha [or Thabatha, in Palestine, near Gaza—*Trans.*], had a dear friend who had a disciple and who lived in Ascalon [or Ashkelon, an ancient seaport in Southern Israel—*Trans.*] One time, during the winter, the Elder sent his disciple to Abba Seridos with letters, so that he might bring back a cylinder (*skytale*) with papyruses.***

When the disciple entered the *cœnobion*, a shower of driving rain broke out, so that the River Thyathos**** flooded, inundating the entire region. As soon as the disciple had delivered the letters, he immediately asked for the papyruses, so that he could depart. "Do you not see the rain?" the Abbot asked him. "Where can you go in this weather?" But the disciple insisted, saying to the Abbot: "I have instructions and I cannot stay." When the disciple began to annoy him with his persistence, the Abbot gave him the cylinder with the papyruses. The disciple took the Abbot's blessing and left. The Abbot then said to us: "Go after him and see what he does at the river."

So we followed him—Abba Dorotheos was also with us. We saw that when he reached the river, he took off his clothes and wrapped the sheets of paper in them and, after tying them to his head, turned to us and said: "Pray for me." He immediately flung himself into that flowing river, in which we could scarcely make him out. We were expecting him to incur great harm, for certain. However, he continued struggling and withstood the current of the river. Finally, being dragged some distance, he reached the opposite bank of the river and, after putting on his clothes, made a prostration to us and went running to his Abba.

* For this reason, a grave ("*taphos*") is likewise called a "memorial" ("*mnemeion*," from the Greek verb meaning "to remember").

** The hyena is a wild beast in Africa, which was also found in Egypt at this time.

*** The "*skytale*" was a small cylindrical staff on which the paper of that time (papyrus, parchment, etc.) was rolled.

**** The Thyathos was a small river in Palestine.

Hypothesis XXXV

We should be subject in simplicity to our superiors in the Lord and accept their orders as coming from God, without criticizing, examining, or correcting them, even if they do not seem for the time being to be of benefit.

A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

The most pious Bishop Fortunatus freed a demoniac by his prayer from the scourge of his demon. The evil spirit had scarcely been expelled from the man, when, evening already approaching, he changed himself into a stranger and fled into the city, running about shouting and saying: "Oh! Look what Bishop Fortunatus has done to me! He threw a stranger out of his cell; so I am looking for some place to rest and I can find nowhere in this city."

A certain man, who heard this voice and who was sitting with his wife and son beside the fire, called to him and asked him what the Bishop had done to him. He then took the demon into his house and bade him sit near them by the fire. The evil spirit sat down, and while they were talking among themselves, entered into the boy and threw him into the fire, killing him instantly.

Then that unfortunate man realized whom the Bishop had expelled and whom he had welcomed; by his deeds, he was taught not to consider himself better or more charitable than the Bishop.

B. From the Life of St. Evthymios

In the Lavra of our venerable Father Evthymios, there was a brother of Asian origin called Auxentios, who was suited to looking after the mules. He was urged by Dometian, the Steward of the monastery, to undertake this duty, but kept putting it off and did not obey. However, since this duty was necessary and useful, the Steward took John and Cyrion the Presbyters with him and, with the two Presbyters, again asked Auxentios to undertake this duty. Since he still failed to show obedience, and since Saturday, when it was possible for them to meet with Evthymios the Great, had now come around, the Steward reported

everything to the Saint. St. Evthymios, then, at once sent for Auxentios and advised him to obey and not to be inflexible and disobedient, following only his own will and refusing service which was useful for all the brethren.

Auxentios, however, neither obeyed the entreaties of Evthymios nor showed respect for his person. He continued to resist and to invoke different excuses, in order to prove that his way was correct. And so, on the one hand, he pleaded that he was a foreigner and did not know how to speak the language of the place; on the other hand, he said that he feared the machinations of the flesh and the various wiles of the Evil One—"lest he find me far from your supervision, overwhelming me and making me a tool of his evil." "I am also afraid," Auxentios protested, "of getting accustomed to responsibilities and noises, and thereby of remaining alien and indifferent to the stillness and calm of my soul." This is what he said, highlighting the harm to his soul as something sufficient to make St. Evthymios change his mind.

Regarding these justifications, St. Evthymios responded to him: "My son, we will beseech God that nothing may harm you and that you may not be overcome by any of the evils you fear, by reason of the obedience that you will display. For the voice of God is that which says: 'I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister' (St. Matthew 20:28) and 'I do not Mine own will, but the will of the Father Who hath sent Me' (St. John 5:30)."

In spite of this, Auxentios persisted all the more and did not yield an inch, and so St. Evthymios spoke to him more sternly: "We have advised you to do what would be beneficial for you; but if you persist in disobedience, you will learn, as no one has hitherto, what is the fruit of disobedience." St. Evthymios had no sooner finished speaking, than Auxentios immediately began to tremble—from what cause, I do not know—and fell to the ground, pitiable in his misfortune. All the brothers of the Lavra who were present were moved by the sorry condition of Auxentios, and they persistently implored, entreated, and begged St. Evthymios to help the fallen brother, who was suffering bitter punishment for his disobedience.

St. Evthymios showed himself eager to accept their pleas and to offer his aid to such a disobedient and insubordinate brother. Taking Auxentios by the hands, he raised him up, though he was still trembling—a tremor which had spread to his every limb—as a punishment for his disobedience. Then, the Elder signed him with the sign of the Cross, that most effective remedy, delivering the man from his suffering

and at once revealing him to be healthy again.

When Auxentios came to his senses and remembered his disobedience, he realized full well the evil that had assailed him and understood that it was the result of his disobedience. He received still greater reproof from his conscience and was overwhelmed by tremendous remorse. He immediately fell down before St. Evthymios, on the one hand, to ask forgiveness for what he had done, and, on the other hand, to beg him to make him secure by his prayers in the future. St. Evthymios at once forgave the brother (for how could his soul, so shortly turned to anger, not be transformed hastily into compassion?) and thus safeguarded his future through his prayer. Auxentios then undertook the duty of looking after the mules without delay.

In this way, the chastening of the Lord, as Holy Scripture says, opens a man's ears and returns him to his senses. He who erred by disobedience before being humbled was, after being humbled by chastening from God, shown to be eager for obedience.

C. From the Life of St. Pachomios

The disciple of Pachomios the Great, Theodore, about whom we have spoken elsewhere, although he was still young in years, was strong in spirit and was making great progress in the virtues, imitating his teacher in all things and being subject to him, through God, as if he were subject to the Lord Himself. Since the soul is goaded to forbearance by the adversities which it meets, St. Pachomios frequently tested Theodore in those things which he ordered him to do. Thus, while at first he would order him to do various tasks, he would then return and—having observed his work on these tasks, which Theodore always carried out with great eagerness—compel him to take up another task, maintaining that he had not done the previous task well. Pachomios did all these things to him, in order to combat in Theodore any temptation of self-satisfaction.

But since Theodore accepted this paternal reprimand with understanding, he was not perturbed and did not dare to answer back or justify himself. When telling others about his Elder, he said that he was the best of craftsmen and an experienced servant of Christ; for many things that appear one way to those who lack experience are correctly seen in a different way by those who have knowledge. "So I, a sinner," Theodore would continue, "am obligated to mourn for myself, until the Lord directs my heart to the good and I become worthy of the obedience

attained by the Holy Fathers. For without the help of the Lord, a man's works are dust and ashes, especially when he bases them on self-assurance."

D. From the Account of the Travels of St. Peter the Apostle, Narrated by St. Clement

When Peter, the Leader of the Apostles, was about to give up this life, after all the brethren of Rome had assembled one day, he took me, Clement, by the hand and, standing in the middle of the Church, he said: "Sons and brethren: listen to me. The end of my course is approaching; I appoint Clement here to be your Bishop, to whom I entrust the throne of my preaching and impart the authority to bind and loose. By virtue of this authority, he will bind whatever needs to be bound and loose whatever needs to be loosed, since he knows the Canons of the Church well.

"You shall listen to him, then, knowing that anyone who causes grief to him who defends the Truth (*viz.*, a Bishop) sins against Christ and angers God the Father of all, for which reason he shall not live; but as for you, do not ever fail to accord to your spiritual Father the honor and obedience that are due to him. If you do this, you, who are the ones being shepherded, will prosper and he, caring for the flock, will be a true Shepherd and not a hireling. For this reason, I will repeat what I said: that he who causes grief, regarding what pertains to God, to the shepherd and teacher grieves the Spirit of God, Whose throne he occupies and Whose representative he is. He who disobeys the words of the Bishop despises Christ and becomes a transgressor of the law."

E. From the *Gerontikon*

1. One of the Elders related how St. Basil once came to a *cœnobion*. After teaching all in consort, he asked the Abbot: "Do you have a brother here who is perfectly obedient?" "They are all at your service and are anxious to be saved, Master," replied the Abbot. The Saint asked again: "Do you have anyone who is *truly* obedient?" The Abbot brought him one monk, whom St. Basil had as his servant at the meal. After they had eaten, the brother gave the Saint water with which to wash himself; when he had finished washing, St. Basil said to the brother: "Come now, I will help you to wash." Without a word of protest, the brother let the Saint pour water for him to wash with; afterwards, the Saint said to

the monk: "When I go into the Altar of the Church, remind me to ordain you a Deacon." The monk obeyed this, too, without argument. St. Basil then ordained him a Priest and took him with him to his residence, on account of his obedience.

2. Concerning Abba Silouan, it was said that he had a disciple named Mark, who was distinguished for his great obedience. His work consisted of calligraphy and the copying of books. Abba Silouan loved this disciple for his obedience. He also had eleven other disciples, who were vexed that he loved Mark more than them. They therefore brought their grievance to the Elders.

One day, the Elders visited Abba Silouan and chided him for his attitude towards his disciples. Instead of replying to them, Abba Silouan took them with him and passed the brothers' cells, one by one; he knocked on the door of each, saying: "Brother so-and-so, come, I need you." But none of them heeded him immediately.

When he came to Mark's cell, he knocked and said to him what he had to the others: "Mark...." As soon as the disciple heard his voice, he bounded out of his cell. After sending him off to do some duty, Abba Silouan then said to the Elders: "Where are the other brothers, Fathers?"

He entered Mark's cell and observed his hand-written manuscript; he noticed that Mark had just begun to add something to it, but as soon as his Abba called, had not made a move with his hand to complete what he was writing. He then brought the handiwork and showed it to the Elders. As soon as they saw it, they said to him: "Truly you are right to love him, Abba; and we love him also, because God loves him for his obedience."

3. Concerning the same Abba Silouan, they related that he was once walking around Sketis with the Elders; wishing to show the obedience of his disciple, on account of which he loved him, he saw a small wild boar and said to the brother: "My son, do you see that small buffalo?" "I certainly do, Elder," answered the disciple. "Do you see how many inches long its horns are?" the Elder asked a second time. "Yes, Elder." The Elders were amazed at the disciple's response, and they were benefitted by his obedience.

4. Concerning Abba Moues, it is said that he had Abba Saïs for a disciple. The Elder told him, in order to test him: "Go and steal." He went and stole from the brothers, for the sake of obedience, giving thanks to

the Lord at all times. The Elder took the stolen goods and secretly returned them to the brethren of the skete.

5. An Elder related the following: "I once went to Abba Sisoes, who lived in Klysma [in what is now the Governorate of As Suways, north of the Suez Gulf in Egypt—*Trans.*], and I asked him to tell me an instructive story. 'Forgive me,' Abba Sisoes replied to me, 'I am an illiterate and ignorant man.' After that, I went to Abba Or and Abba Athre. Abba Or had been sick for eighteen years. I made a prostration before them and asked them to tell me an instructive story. 'What can I tell you?' Abba Or answered me. 'Go and do what you see fit. God is close to the man who compels himself to do all good deeds.'

"Abba Or and Abba Athre did not come from the same region, and yet there was such great peace between them, that their souls were free of their bodies. The obedience of Abba Athre was great, as was the humility of Abba Or. I stayed with them for a few days, carefully examining their way of life, and I saw their many admirable deeds, of which I shall recount only this one:

"One day somebody brought them a small fish, and Abba Athre wanted to cook it for the Elder. He began to chop it up, but in the meantime Abba Or called to him. He immediately put down the knife and did not chop up the remainder. I marvelled at his great obedience, because he did not say: 'Wait a minute, until I have chopped the fish.' I then said to the Abba: 'Abba Athre, where did you find this obedience?' 'It is not my own; it is the Elder's. If you want, come and see his obedience.'

"So Abba Athre cooked the fish, deliberately spoiled it, and brought it to the Elder. He ate it without saying anything. Abba Athre asked him: 'Elder, is the fish good?' 'It is very good,' replied Abba Or. Then he brought him another small fish, beautifully cooked, and when the Elder had eaten it, he said to him: 'I spoiled it, Elder.' 'Yes, you did spoil it a little,' responded Abba Or. After this, Abba Athre said to me: 'So do you now understand that the obedience is the Elder's?' I departed, having received benefit from these Abbas, and did what I could to put into practice what I had seen."

F. From St. Ephraim

A monk asked an Elder: "My Abba ordered me to go to the bakery to make loaves for the brethren; but the workers, being worldly people,

say inappropriate things among themselves, which I derive no benefit from hearing. What should I do?"

The Elder replied: "Have you not seen many children learning their letters together? And yet each of them studies his lesson and not another's. So you should pay attention to yourself and the meditation of your heart. But if you are conquered by the passions, then you should confess to your Elder and do what he tells you, for he knows better than you do what is in the interest of your soul."

G. From Abba Isaiah

If your Elder sends you out, ask him: "Elder, where do you want me to go? What do you need?" Do what he tells you. Do not add or subtract anything from his instructions; you should not even wish to do good to a pauper, if you have not asked him beforehand. If you do something without his giving you permission, you will be sinning.

H. From St. Barsanouphios

A brother asked an Elder: "Elder, should we cut off our will in good things, or in neutral things, or in those that are considered to be a transgression of God's commandments? Also, if an obedience is beyond my ability, so that I may not be distressed or perturbed later on, should I refrain from carrying it out?"

The Elder replied: "Brother, he who wishes to be a monk is not entitled to have his will in anything. The Lord teaches us this when He says: 'I came into the world not to do My own will.' For he who wishes to carry out one thing, or desist from another, either makes himself out to be more discerning than the one who gives the order, or the demons are poking fun at him; but both are evil and are due to demonic activity. Hence, you should be obedient in all things. For your Elder, who gives you instructions, will bear the responsibility, as the one who is accountable for your salvation. If what he orders you to do seems burdensome, ask him about it and leave the matter to his discretion.

"But if those who have given you orders are brothers, and you see or think that a thing is harmful to you or beyond your capability, then ask the Elder again and do what he tells you. For if you wish to make decisions not only about things, but also about men, then you will cause harm to yourself. Where the thing (about which they are giving orders) seems good, you should obey the brothers; but where your mind hesi-

tates, or the thing seems to be beyond your ability, or presents the possibility of harm, then you should entrust yourself to your Elder and do what he decides is good. For he knows what he is doing and how he should look after your soul; let your soul be at rest, then, and have confidence that what he tells you is in conformity with the Will of God. Whatever is helpful according to God does not bring distress or agitation, since nothing bad comes from good: 'Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit' (St. Matthew 7:17)."

The brother asked again: "What does it mean for someone to cut off his will?" "Brother, cutting off your will is progress in God's eyes; it consists, with regard to things that are reckoned to be good, in one's doing, not what he wants, but what the Saints say. In the case of bad things, he should avoid what is improper by his own choice."

Hypothesis XXXVI

What the sins of disobedience and grumbling against our teachers in the Lord are; the Christian should not object at all or justify himself, but should in all cases resist his own will and love reproof, not avoid it.

A. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)

Brethren, we should not grumble in anything that is reasonable—or even about what appears unreasonable to us—but should be obedient and thankful in everything, both to God and to those who give us orders according to God. If we complain in anything, then we will be like the sinful and ungrateful Jews, who murmured against the servant of God, as Holy Scripture says: "The people murmured against Moses; and Moses said: 'Your murmuring is not against us, but against God'" (Exodus 16:2, 8). All who complained perished in the desert, because of their grumbling.

Their descendants, perpetuating the ingratitude and disobedience of their fathers, at one time grumbled against the followers of the Lord, saying: "Why do ye eat and drink with sinners?" (St. Luke 5:30); yet at another time, they grumbled against the Savior Himself, when He told them: "I am the living bread which came down from Heaven" (St. John 6:51). The Lord said to them: "No man can come to Me, except the Father Who hath sent Me draw him" (St. John 6:44)—when He finds that man, in my opinion, obedient and grateful and not inclined to grumble. The first laborers (in the parable) grumbled about the last laborers, who were invited around the eleventh hour, saying: "Thou hast made them equal unto us," etc. The Lord, again, responded to them: "Friend, I do thee no wrong: did I not agree with thee for a penny? Take what is thine, and go thy way" (*cf.* St. Matthew 20:1-14). But whither does He send this friend? Where the men of the left-hand portion will be, in the eternal fire, which has been prepared for the Devil and his angels (St. Matthew 25:41). This is demonstrated by what follows, namely, that He accuses them of being wicked and envious: "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" (St. Matthew 20:15).

B. From Abba Mark

He who secretly mixes his own will up with an obedience that he has been given is an adulterer, as is shown in the wisdom literature (Ecclesiasticus 32:17; Proverbs 6:32-33), and for a lack of sense, he suffers pains and humiliations. Just as the union of water and fire is impossible, so self-justification and humility are contrary to each other. If you wish to be saved, you should love sincere speech and never recklessly despise reproof. True speech changed the brood of vipers and suggested that they flee from the coming wrath; he who gratefully accepts words of truth will welcome God the Word Himself; for the Lord said: "He that receiveth you receiveth Me" (St. Matthew 10:40).

A sinner who is reproved in a Godly way by the faithful is like the paralytic who, having been lowered from the roof, received forgiveness by virtue of the faith of those who carried him. He who hates reproofs shows that he willfully lingers in his passion; he who loves reproofs is acting rationally.

Just as those who sail on the sea gratefully endure the scorching of the sun, so also those who hate vice love reproof. For the sun is opposed to the winds, while reproof is opposed to the passions. He who does not wish to be corrected by the commandments and admonitions of Holy Scripture will be compelled to walk by the horsewhip and the goad; if he is not made sober by these, then he will be led by the muzzle and the bit, which they will put on his jaws (Psalm 31:9).

C. From St. Maximos

Just as sin is the work of disobedience, so also is virtue the work of obedience; and just as disobedience is followed by a transgression of the commandments and separation from the Giver of the commandments, so also obedience is followed by the implementation of the commandments and uninterrupted union, through love, with the Giver of the commandments. He who transgresses a commandment through disobedience and perpetrates a sin separates himself from union through love with the Giver of the commandments.

Hypothesis XXXVII

One should not condemn his teacher, even if his teacher does some things at variance with what he teaches; for many disciples have entrusted themselves to negligent teachers and, not having condemned them, but remaining subject to them in the Lord, have saved themselves and have become the cause of their teachers' salvation.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Once upon a time, there lived an anchorite who had great discernment; he wanted to remain in one of the *Kellia* [the so-called hermits' "Cells" were huts and dwellings scattered in the most remote parts of the Egyptian desert, where anchorites and their disciples dwelled in solitary isolation—*Trans.*], but for the moment he was unable to find a cell. Another Elder, on hearing of the anchorite, since he had a secluded cell that was vacant, invited him to stay in that cell until he could find another one. The anchorite went and occupied it. Some of those living in the area went to see him, being a newcomer, and each took him what he could; and the anchorite received them and offered them hospitality.

The Elder who had given him the cell began to envy him, to malign him, and to say: "Though I have been living here many years in severe asceticism, nonetheless no one comes to me; yet this impostor has been here just a few days, and look how many visitors he has." Thereupon, he said to his disciple: "Go tell him: 'Leave right away, because I need the cell.'"

The disciple went to the anchorite and told him: "My Elder asks, 'How are you doing?'" "Pray for me," he replied, "because my stomach is giving me trouble." When the disciple returned to his cell, he said to the Elder, who had sent him: "The Elder told me that he is looking for another cell and is going to leave." Two days later, the Elder said again to his disciple: "Go and tell him that if he does not leave the cell, I will come and chase him away with a stick." The disciple went to the anchorite and said to him: "My Elder heard that you were ill, and he is upset; he sent me to visit you." The anchorite replied to him: "Tell him

that, by his prayers, I have been getting better." So the disciple returned to his Elder and said: "The anchorite says, 'God willing, I am going to leave by Sunday.'"

When Sunday came, and the anchorite had not left the cell, the Elder took a stick and went to thrash him and chase him away. But his disciple said to him, as he was departing: "I can run ahead, Elder, in case there are any people there who might be scandalized." The Elder allowed him to do so, and the disciple, running ahead, told the anchorite: "My Elder is coming to console you and take you into his cell." As soon as he heard of the Elder's love, the anchorite went out to meet him; and when he saw him, he made a prostration from a distance and said to him: "Do not trouble yourself, Father; I am coming to your holiness."

God, seeing the good intention behind the disciple's deed, moved the heart of his Abba to compunction; throwing down his staff, he ran to embrace the anchorite. He kissed him and led him off to his cell, realizing that he had not heard anything of what the Elder had said against him. When they reached the cell, he asked his disciple: "You did not tell him any of the things I said to you, did you?" "No," replied the disciple. When he heard this, the Elder rejoiced, realizing that his envy was of the Devil. He put the anchorite at ease and looked after him; afterwards, he fell at the feet of his disciple, saying to him: "You should now be the Elder and I should be your disciple, since it is by your doing that both our souls have been saved."

2. One of the Elders related that there once lived an Elder who was given to drinking. He would spend the day weaving a mat in his cell; in the evening, he would sell his handiwork in the village and spend whatever he earned on wine. After some time, a brother went to stay with him as his disciple. He, too, would spend the whole day weaving a mat, which the Elder would sell, using the proceeds from the handiwork of both of them for wine to drink. For the disciple he would bring only a little bread, late in the evening. This went on for three years, without the disciple speaking back to him or protesting in any way.

One day, the disciple said to himself: "I am poorly clad and eat my bread in great deprivation; I will get up and leave this place." But he thought to himself again: "Where can I go? Let me stay here, since I am living the common life for the sake of God." As he was entertaining these thoughts, an Angel of the Lord appeared before him and said: "Do not go away, for tomorrow I will visit you."

The following day, therefore, the disciple said to his Elder: "Father,

please do not go anywhere today, for my own are coming to take me away." But when the time came for the Elder to leave as usual for the village, he said to the disciple: "My son, it looks as if they are not coming today, since they are late." "Yes, Abba, for sure they are coming"; and while he was speaking with his Elder, he fell asleep in the Lord. Seeing this, the Elder began to weep and say: "Alas, my son, for I have been living negligently for many years, whereas you have saved your soul in a short space of time through patient endurance." Thereafter, he lived soberly and became like a novice himself.

B. From St. Ephraim

Those who live the monastic life, brethren, should not be disobedient or in any way contradict their teachers in the Lord, but should behave with great humility before God and men. If it so happens that an Elder preaches virtue by words alone, but neglects to put them into practice, let us not for this reason give the Devil the opportunity to divert our souls from this end, but let us call to mind the Lord, Who said: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all therefore whatsoever they bid you do, that...do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (St. Matthew 23:2-3).

And the Apostle Peter also exhorts us: "Be subject not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward; for this is acceptable with God, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps; Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (I St. Peter 2:18-23). Brethren, you also have the Prophet Samuel as an example of humility; for he did not act pridefully against the priest Eli, even though he had heard so much concerning him from God, but remained humbly under his authority (I Kings 3:1-21).

Let us, therefore, beloved, become worthy of our salvation and let us be ready to make a prostration for any word that we might hear, and above all from our superior in the Lord. For just as water quenches a fire, so a sincere prostration quenches anger and banishes wrath. Let yourself be persuaded by the captain of fifty in the time of the Prophet

Elias, who propitiated the Prophet by his humility and, together with his companions, was preserved from Prophet's wrath (IV Kings 1:9-15).

Be obedient, therefore, beloved, to your superior in all things, for the Lord's sake, and keep his words unto the end, disdaining not even a single word that comes from his mouth; then He Who said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (St. Matthew 18:20), will always be with you.

Beloved, if our Abbots err before us, which I pray may not happen, let us be obedient to them with a good conscience and serve them as ones who serve the Lord, and not men, knowing that we will receive our reward from the Lord.

C. From the *Gerontikon*

A certain Elder was living outside Alexandria in what were called the hermits' Cells; he was very irascible and mean-spirited. On hearing of this, a younger brother made a promise to God, saying: "O Lord, in order to atone for the sins that I committed as a layman, I will go and live with this Elder, so that I may serve him and give him respite." Everyday, the Elder would insult him as if he were a dog.

God, Who saw the patience and humility of the brother, six years after he had placed himself under this Elder, granted him a revelatory dream: in this dream, he saw a person holding a large sheet of paper, one half of which had been erased, while the other half still had writing on it. "Struggle," the person said, as he showed the sheet to the brother. "On this side, the Lord God has wiped out half of your debt—struggle, now, to take care of the remainder."

Living nearby there was another Elder, a spiritual man, who was aware of the brother's situation. He had learned in detail how the ill-tempered Elder neglected and unjustly afflicted the brother, that the brother continued making prostrations to the Elder, asking his forgiveness, but that the Elder would not be reconciled to him. Every time the spiritual Elder met this brother, he would ask him: "How goes it, my son? How did you pass the day? Have we perhaps made some gains? Have we perhaps wiped something from the sheet?" If it turned out, from time to time, that a day passed without the brother being insulted, spat upon, or persecuted by the Elder, the brother would then go in the evening to his neighbor, the spiritual Elder, and say to him, weeping: "Woe is me, Abba, because this day was bad for me and I gained nothing, but passed the day in peace."

Six years later, the brother reposed. After a short while, the spiritual Elder told us about him: "Fathers," he said, "I saw him in the company of the Martyrs, supplicating God with great boldness on behalf of his Elder, saying: 'O Lord, just as Thou hadst mercy on me through him, have mercy on him in Thy great compassion for the sake of me, Thy servant.'" Forty days later, the disciple took his Elder with him to the place of repose. Behold what boldness is gained by those who endure afflictions for the sake of God.

Hypothesis XXXVIII

How the Grace of God often teaches those who watch over themselves and entrust themselves to His Providence what they ought to do through simple people and strangers; the humble do not refuse to learn from anyone they may encounter.

A. From the Life of St. Ephraim

Ephraim the Great was continuously occupied with the thought of God, and he unceasingly brought to his mind the Day of Judgment; for this reason he was in a constant state of mourning and, as the Psalmist says, he lodged for a long time in the wilderness (Psalm 54:8), as if he were a fugitive, so as to escape all the tumult and surge of life. Going from place to place for the sake of spiritual benefit and edification—for he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to do this—at the command of God he once left his fatherland, like Abraham (Genesis 12:1-5), and went to Edessa.* The purpose of this journey of his was, on the one hand, to venerate the holy Relics and places of the city and, on the other hand, to meet with one of the learned men of this place, in order to receive the fruit of knowledge from him. He besought this from God as follows: "O Jesus Christ, Master and Lord of all, vouchsafe me to enter the city of Edessa, so that I might meet there the kind of man who will be able to speak with me for the edification and benefit of my soul."

After praying in this way, when he had reached the entrance to the city and had gone in through the gate, he became pensive. He was anxiously concerned about what kind of man he would encounter in order to fulfill his prayer; the sort of things he would ask him about; and what kind of benefit he would receive from this meeting. As he was walking about, engrossed in his thoughts, he suddenly came across a woman—and a prostitute at that. This encounter was certainly the work of God, Who often arranges circumstances in such a way as to achieve one set of results from its apparent opposite, in a mysterious and ineffable manner. Thus, when the holy Ephraim met the prostitute, contrary to all expectation, he stood opposite her and looked at her, full of surprise, while his soul was inwardly disturbed and distressed, since what he had

sought from God in prayer had not come to pass; but rather, the complete opposite. For her part, the woman, seeing him look at her with such curiosity and surprise, in turn cast a penetrating glance at him.

After each had observed the other in this way for some time, the great ascetic thought to shame her and restore her to the modesty that befits women. So he said to her: "Well, then, do you not blush with embarrassment, madam, from staring at me like this?" "It is appropriate for me," she replied, "to look at you, because I was fashioned from your own rib; whereas you should not gaze at me so inquisitively, but should be looking at the earth from which you yourself were fashioned." When St. Ephraim heard these words, he without hesitation thanked the woman profusely for the help that he had received from her reply; and he also offered fervent thanks to God, Who can often benefit us from unexpected quarters and bring us greater profit than we had hoped for.

B. From the Life of St. Pachomios

1. St. Pachomios the Great, realizing well how wise his disciple Theodore was in all things—for although Theodore was young, he strengthened many who were weaker in their asceticism—rejoiced greatly over this.

Everyone in the *cœnobion* was accustomed to gathering each afternoon in one part of the monastery to listen attentively to the teaching of the great Pachomios. One afternoon, when they had gathered together for this purpose, he ordered Theodore, who, as we said, was young (not more than twenty years old), to preach the word of God to the brethren. Without any objection or disobedience, Theodore immediately opened his mouth and said many things to the monks for their spiritual benefit.

When some of the older monks heard the young Theodore speaking, they did not want to hear him, saying among themselves: "Since this upstart is teaching *us*, we will not listen to him." So, leaving the assembly, each withdrew to his cell. When the lesson was over, St. Pachomios summoned the older monks. As soon as they came, he asked them: "For what reason did you leave the preaching and withdraw to your cells?" They answered: "Because you appointed a boy as teacher to instruct senior monks who have grown old in the monastery."

On hearing this excuse, the great Pachomios sighed deeply and said to them dejectedly: "Do you know whence evil came into the world?" "Whence?" they asked. "From pride, for which cause Lucifer, who rises

at dawn, fell from Heaven and was dashed to the earth. For this cause King Nabuchodonosor of Babylon dwelt with wild beasts. Or have you not heard what Holy Scripture says: 'Everyone that is prideful in heart is an abomination before the Lord' (Proverbs 16:5), and 'whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted' (St. Matthew 23:12)? Now then, by virtue of your forgetting these things, you were overcome by the Devil and you lost all of your virtue; for pride is the mother and origin of all evils. You did not abandon Theodore when you withdrew, but in fleeing from the word of God, you were separated from the Holy Spirit. You are truly worthy of pity. How is it that you failed to understand that Satan enticed you to come to the point that you have reached?

"Oh, the great wonder! 'God humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, for our sake' (Philippians 2:8), and we, lowly though we are by nature, vaunt ourselves. He Who by nature is sublime and infinite benefited the world through His humility, though He could consume the universe with His glance; whereas we who are earth and ashes, and still more insignificant than these, become puffed up, unaware that in so doing we send ourselves off to the nether regions of the earth. Did you not notice how attentively I listened to his talk? I assure you that I myself profited greatly from hearing him; for I did not allow him to preach to you in order to test you, but because I myself wanted to be edified.

"How much more ought you to have listened to him with humility. I tell you truly, I who am your spiritual Father in the Lord, that I listened to him so devotedly that I did not know my right from my left. I tell you before God, that if you do not display the greatest repentance for this fall of yours, so that you may be forgiven your transgression, you will go to perdition; and since you have made this evil beginning, you will not cease until you become worthy of the ultimate verdict of condemnation."

With these words, the great Pachomios sufficiently cauterized the wound of pride, and by his paternal admonition effectively cured their sickness; for he was abrupt when necessary, but he was also gentle, on the other hand, when the situation called for it, sometimes chiding sinners and at other times urging them on to good.

2. In another instance, the Saint was sitting in the workshop, where he was weaving mats, and a boy, who had been appointed to serve that week, came up to him. He looked at the Saint as he worked and said to him: "Do not spin the thread that way; you are not doing it properly.

Abba Theodore weaves in a different way."

The great Pachomios then humbly rose from his handiwork and said to the boy: "My son, teach me the other way." After learning from the boy the other way of working, he sat down to work again with great joy, laying low even in this circumstance the spirit of pride; for if he had been dominated by the mind of the flesh, he would not have been persuaded, but would have rebuked the boy for speaking out of turn.

C. From the Life of St. Arsenios

1. The great Arsenios was very well educated in both secular and Christian knowledge, surpassing all of his contemporaries in learning and virtue. For this reason, the Emperor Theodosios chose him out of all the educated men of his time to be a tutor to his sons, Honorios and Arcadios. And even though he was so well educated and had lived an ascetic life in Sketis for some time, acquiring greater knowledge of God, he nonetheless had such great humility that he was not ashamed to ask questions even of those who were less educated, and thus to reap every possible benefit from them.

Someone once saw him questioning an Egyptian monk, seeking to learn from him about various thoughts. So striking did the person consider this fact, that he sought to ascertain the reason for it. The great Arsenios replied to him with simplicity: "I do not deny that I possess considerable education. All the same, I confess that I have not even begun to learn the alphabet of this unlettered peasant," meaning by this, Godly activity and knowledge.

2. On another occasion, the wondrous Arsenios went to the river. As he was getting ready to wash, an Ethiopian woman grabbed him by his cloak. When the great Arsenios scolded her severely for this, the woman replied to him: "If you are a monk, Arsenios, flee to the mountains." Arsenios considered these words beneficial.

D. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Anthony once received letters from the Emperor Constantine, asking him to go to Constantinople, and he pondered on what he should do. Addressing himself to Abba Paul, his disciple, he asked him whether he should go. Abba Paul replied to him: "If you go, your name will be 'Anthony'; but if you do not go, it will be 'Abba Anthony.'" He

obeyed Paul and did not go.

2. A brother once asked a young monk, that is, a boy, about the benefit of conversations. The boy answered: "If the words of a conversation are just babble, avoid them; but if they are helpful, take advantage of the opportunity and speak; but however good they may be, do not speak for a long time, but be quick to break off the conversation and you will have rest."

3. Abba Olympios said: "A pagan priest once came down to Sketis and came to my cell, where he rested. When he saw the harsh conditions under which monks live, he said to me: 'Living as you do in this way, do you never see anything of your God?' 'No,' I replied to him. 'Whenever we offer sacrifice to our god,' he said, 'he hides nothing from us, but reveals all of his mysteries to us; and you, who subject yourselves to so many toils, to vigils, and to silence—to ascetic practices—you say that you see nothing of Him at all? To be sure, if you do not see anything of Him, you have evil thoughts in your heart, which separate you from your God; and this is why He does not disclose His mysteries to you.'

"After this visit I went and reported the words of the pagan priest to the Elders. They marvelled and said: 'Truly it is so; for unclean thoughts separate a man from God.'"

4. Abba Makarios said: "When I was younger, since I was weighed down with torpor in my cell, I went out into the desert, saying to myself: 'Whomsoever you encounter, question him for your benefit.' After a short while, I found a boy who was tending bullocks, and I said to him: 'My boy, what am I to do, since I am hungry?' 'Eat,' answered the boy. 'I ate, and I am still hungry,' I replied to him. 'Then eat again,' responded the boy. 'I have eaten many times and I am still hungry,' I said for the third time. With some astonishment, the boy replied to me: 'Since you always want to eat, Elder, are you perhaps an ass?' I was helped by this answer and I departed."

5. An Elder said: "I prefer to be taught than to teach."

6. Abba Makarios asked Abba Zacharias: "Tell me, Elder, what is the work of a monk?" "Are you asking *me*, Father?" replied Abba Zacharias with humility. "Zacharias, my son, I have an inward feeling about you;

there is something urging me to ask you." "In my opinion, Father, to compel oneself in all things—this is the work of a monk."

* Edessa was a city in Mesopotamia, in which St. Ephraim the Great founded a theological school in 353 A.D. This city was previously ruled by King Avgar [or Abgar—*Trans.*], who requested and received the Icon of the Lord not-made-by-hands (the Holy *Mandelion* [napkin—*Trans.*]).

Hypothesis XXXIX

The faithful Christian should not be confident in himself, but should believe that through his spiritual Father he is both saved and enabled to do everything good; and he should invoke the prayers of his Elder, for they have great power.

A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

Libertinus, the disciple of the righteous Honoratus, about whom we spoke in previous chapters,* at the bidding of his Abbot, who had succeeded Honoratus, once went out to attend to some item of monastery business. Out of the love that he had for St. Honoratus, Libertinus was always in the habit, wherever he went, of carrying one of his teacher's shoes in his bosom. One time, when he was going to Ravenna,** a certain woman, who was clutching the body of her dead son, saw Libertinus and, burning with longing for her dead child and believing that Libertinus was a servant of God, grabbed his horse by the bridle, swearing that she would not let him proceed unless he resurrected her son.

Libertinus, who did not feel that he was at all capable of performing such a miracle, trembled at the woman's oath and at her request. For this reason, out of exceeding humility, he tried to escape from the woman. But she would not give way, and Libertinus was overcome by compassion. He dismounted his horse, knelt, and raised his hands to Heaven. After taking from his bosom the shoe which he was carrying with him, he placed it on the breast of the dead child. As he was praying, the child's soul returned to his body and he was resurrected at once. Libertinus took him by the hand and delivered him, alive, to his mother, who was weeping. Thereafter, he continued his journey.

Peter

What are we to believe in this case? That the sanctity of Honoratus, or the entreaty of Libertinus, had the power to work such a great miracle?

St. Gregory the Dialogist

Gregory

The woman's faith contributed to the accomplishment of so great a miracle, but also the power of the two men. And for this reason I reckon that Libertinus was able to perform it; that is to say, he believed more in the power of his teacher than in himself. He was of the opinion that what he besought from God could come to pass only after he placed his Elder's shoe on the child's breast. In like manner, it is well known that Elissaios, holding the cloak of his teacher, the Prophet Elias, went to the Jordan and smote the waters once; but they did not part at all. Yet, as soon as he said, "Where is the God of Elias?" and smote the waters again with his teacher's cloak, at once he made a path through the middle of the waters (IV Kings 2:14). Do you understand, Peter, what power humility had in the miracles that came about? Libertinus achieved results equal to those of his teacher, when he had recourse to him and invoked his name with faith.

B. From the Life of St. Gregory the Wonderworker

Gregory the Great was once at prayer, as was his custom, on his mountain;*** suddenly he perceived a tumult and a struggle, and it became clear to those present that he was startled and in anguish over some vision. He strained his ears, as if to catch some sound coming from a distance, and after a considerable time had elapsed, during which he remained unshaken and unmoved, as if the vision had come to a pleasing conclusion, he recovered from this trance of his and glorified God with a joyous voice, uttering the verse of victory and thanksgiving: "Blessed be the Lord, Who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth" (Psalm 123:6).

Since those who were near him were amazed at the ecstasy of St. Gregory and sought to learn from him what kind of vision he had seen, St. Gregory, as tradition relates, told them: "At that moment I saw that Satan had been conquered and had suffered a terrible fall at the hands of a youth called 'Troadios.' This Troadios was led by the executioners before the impious ruler, and after being subjected to many tortures, won the crown of martyrdom." This account astounded one of the disciples of the Saint, who was next to him—a former temple-keeper whom St. Gregory had attracted to the Christian Faith and ordained a Deacon of the Divine Mysteries. This Deacon did not dare to question what was said, but at the same time he considered it beyond the capacity of a man

(without someone telling him about it) to speak about an event without being there himself. He fervently pleaded with his teacher to let him verify what had happened with his own eyes, and not to prevent him from going to the places where the miracle had occurred. St. Gregory tried to dissuade him, saying that it was dreadful to be in the midst of murderers and to run the risk of suffering something undesirable through the working of temptation. The Deacon, however, said that he placed his faith in the protection of the Saint's prayers, and added the following: "Place me under the protection of your God and no fear whatever of the Enemy will then pose a threat to me." Finally St. Gregory gave him the help of God as a companion and sent him off with his blessing; the Deacon went on his way without encountering anything noteworthy on his journey.

That evening, he reached the city, and since he was weary from the journey, he saw fit to relax with a bath. That area, however, was dominated by a homicidal demon, who lived in the baths and whose destructive power worked after dark to the detriment of all who approached the baths. For this reason, they were inaccessible and closed after sunset. The Deacon went to these baths and asked the caretaker to open them for him and not to deprive him of the relief that came from bathing.

The bathkeeper assured the Deacon that none of those who had dared enter the water of the baths at that hour came out alive, but that, after evening fell, a demon was totally in control of the baths. Out of ignorance, many had already suffered calamities, and these, instead of enjoying themselves, as they had hoped, came upon lamentations, their graves, and mourning. The bathkeeper related these and similar stories to the Deacon, but the latter would not relinquish his desire in the least; rather, he persisted in coercing the caretaker in every way possible to allow him to go inside. After all of this, the bathkeeper, so as not to incur danger for himself from the stranger's ignorance, and thinking of his profit, handed the key over to him and departed.

As soon as the Deacon had entered and taken off his clothing, the demon began to cause all kinds of fearful and terrifying things. Then there appeared various apparitions, resembling fire and smoke. These apparitions were gradually transformed before his eyes into men and beasts, and they made all kinds of noise, becoming so bold that they surrounded his person, singing and lunging at him. But the Deacon, undaunted, made the sign of the precious Cross and invoked the Name of Christ; in this way, he passed through the first bath chamber without

anything happening to him.

However, when he advanced further, he encountered more frightening sights: the demon took on a more fearful appearance, and at the same time created the impression that the building was about to be demolished by an earthquake. The floor looked as if it were being split apart from beneath, revealing a fire below, with burning sparks flying out from the water. But once again, the Deacon used the same weapons—the sign of the precious Cross and the Name of Christ—and he invoked the aid of his teacher's prayers; in this way, he drove away these images and the terrifying apparitions. When he emerged from the water and went towards the exit, he was hindered again, since the demon controlled the door. However, again undeterred, the Deacon destroyed this obstruction by the same power, and the door opened at the sign of the Cross. After everything had turned out in accordance with the Deacon's desire, it is said that the demon shouted to him—in a human voice—that he should not regard as his own the power through which he was enabled to escape disaster; for this voice ascribed the escape from woes to the one who had entrusted the Deacon to the protection of Him Who can truly protect us (that is, God).

The Deacon having been preserved in the way that we have said, this fact amazed those who were familiar with the place, because no one who had hitherto dared enter the baths after sunset had come out alive afterwards. The Deacon then recounted to them all that had happened to him, learning from them what exploits the Martyrs had endured in that district of the city. Supplementing these exploits with all that had happened to him, and all that he had seen and heard, whereby he had been taught by experience itself about the power of a great teacher's faith, he left to his contemporaries and to posterity, as well, a common means of self-protection: that of entrusting ourselves to God through Priests. Such a tradition has prevailed throughout the Church to this day—but especially among the people of that city, in view of the help extended at the time by St. Gregory to the Deacon, which is preserved in pious memory.

C. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Daniel said: "Abba Arsenios once summoned me and told me: 'Give relief to your neighbor, so that when he departs from this world to the Lord he may plead on your behalf, and it will be well with you.'"

2. A brother from Sketis came to Abba Ammoun and said to him: "Father, my Elder is sending me on an errand, but I fear falling to fornication." "At whatever hour you are bothered by the temptation of fornication," answered the Elder, "say: 'O God of Hosts, by the prayers of my spiritual Father, deliver me.'" One day, a young woman tried to detain the monk by force, and the monk cried out in a loud voice: "O God of my spiritual Father, deliver me." And—oh, the wonder!—he immediately found himself on the road leading to the skete.

3. An Elder had someone in the village who served his needs. One time, this caretaker was late in coming to the skete, as was his custom, and so the Elder's provisions began to run short; and since the servant continued to tarry, his supplies were exhausted—even what he needed for the handiwork with which he occupied himself in his cell. The Elder, therefore, was upset, as he had neither materials for doing his handiwork nor anything to eat. Weighed down by this distress, he said to his disciple: "Are you willing to go to the village?" "I will do as you wish," replied the disciple timidly, since he was afraid of going near the village for fear of some scandal. But so as not to disobey his Elder, he consented to go. "Go, then," said the Elder again, "and I believe that the God of my Fathers will protect you from every temptation." After giving him his blessing, he sent him on his way.

The brother arrived at the village, and when he had found the servant's house, he stood outside the door and knocked. It so happened, however, that the caretaker, along with his family, was away from the house that day, outside the village for a memorial service. In the house, there remained only one of his daughters, who opened the door when the brother knocked. On learning what he wanted, she urged him to enter the house; she simultaneously began pulling him inside. But the brother refused to enter. Finally, after putting much pressure on him, the girl got the better of him and drew him close to her. When the brother realized that he was being bothered by evil thoughts, he sighed from the depths of his heart and said to God: "O Lord, through the prayers of my Father, save me at this hour of peril." No sooner had he completed this prayer, than he immediately found himself by the river, journeying towards the mountain, and he was restored to his Elder unharmed.

4. Abraham, the disciple of Abba Sisoes, was once troubled by a demon; being clairvoyant, the Elder knew that the disciple had fallen.

He rose at that very moment, lifted his hands up to Heaven, and addressed this prayer to God: "O God our Savior, Who desirest not the death of a sinner but that he should return and live, heal Thy servant Abraham and deliver him from the temptation of the demon." Abraham was immediately healed.

5. An Elder sent his disciple to the well to draw water; the well was a long way away from their cell. But the disciple forgot to take a rope with him; only when he reached the well did he realize that he had not taken a rope (to lower his bucket). At once, he prayed to God with faith, and—oh, the wonder!—the level of the water rose up. After the disciple had filled his jar, the water once more went down to its natural level.

D. From St. Barsanouphios

A brother asked an Elder: "If I am instructed and given a blessing**** by the Fathers to go somewhere, and I happen to be walking along a road on which there is an ambush set by brigands—and yet I need to cross it—how should I do this, Father? Without taking any precautions, setting my trust on the blessing, or in some other way? If it turns out that I suddenly run into the brigands, what concern should I have for myself or the items that I am carrying? Moreover, if I neglected talking to my Elder beforehand regarding the brigands, should I perhaps return and mention it to him?"

The Elder responded to these inquiries as follows:

"When we receive a blessing from one of the holy Fathers for some obedience, we should believe that we have God's help and we should have confidence. Just as in the world, when one hands his house over to some mighty nobleman, this nobleman will look after it very carefully out of respect for the donor, so much more will God also protect one whom the Saints, whose order he is carrying out, have entrusted to Him. Holy Scripture says about God that 'He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him; He also will hear their supplication, and will save them' (Psalm 144:19).

"In every way and in every instance, then, we should fulfill the obediences of the Holy Elders exactly; and if we do so, it will redound to the help and salvation of our soul. If it should happen that, after we have received our orders, we encounter vexation and distress in the course of things, or God allows us to fall to temptation along the way, let us not lose our trust or permit our minds to tell us that those who gave us our

orders and placed us under God's protection are weak, such that we become scandalized by them, if it so happens that, after the obedience was given, we lose something or are even wounded.

"Let us recall how the Divine Apostle himself, although he was a strong and perfect Saint, yet fell into many afflictions, all of them painful at that: 'How many perils I endured and the Lord rescued me from all of them' [*cf.* II Corinthians 11:24-33] and 'many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord shall deliver them out of them all' (Psalm 33:20); and also, 'that we must through many tribulations enter into the Kingdom of God' (Acts 14:22; *cf.* II Corinthians 6:1-10). Elsewhere, again, Holy Scripture says: 'A man who has not experienced temptations does not have experience and has not been tested' (*cf.* St. James 1:12). Let us keep it well in mind that no good thing is accomplished without vexation; for it faces the envy of the Devil.

"If, on the other hand, it turns out that we accomplish our task without anxiety, let us not become prideful and suppose that it is perhaps because we are worthy that we have been saved from anxiety; on the contrary, we should think that because God knows our weakness and because it was not possible for us to endure the affliction, He sheltered us from suffering, through the protection of the holy men who gave us our command. Concerning those who have the capacity to endure afflictions and temptations, Scripture says: 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried,' etc. (St. James 1:12).

"Be careful that you do not undertake your journey thoughtlessly, just because you have a blessing from the Holy Elders; that is, if you hear something on the way or are informed about some adversity, you should guard yourself and do whatever you can to avoid falling into the danger posed by the hazard; and, imploring God and keeping in mind the blessing of the Holy Elders, you should make sure to traverse the hazardous place in the company of others, or ask how you may cross it safely— either by that road or by another. And even if you have the pretext of a pious intention, or you propose to visit some Holy Fathers, and you hear that there are brigands or other dangers in that place, do not set out to traverse that road—trusting only in your pious purpose—without safety precautions; but make yourself as secure as possible, so as to avoid, in this way, at least the danger of arrogance. For one should not expose himself to temptation by his own will; he should only endure with gratitude whatever comes his way by God's permission. We are told that some of the Fathers, wishing to visit other Saints who lived deep in the desert, when they heard about brigands or other hazards,

postponed their departure; this, for us, is an example of humility.

"If you know, or are informed beforehand, that the road is perilous, ask your Elder: 'What do you think I should do?' and fulfill whatever he tells you. But if you forget to ask him and, leaving after receiving a blessing, you remember on the way that you forgot to ask him, it is not necessary for you to return in order to ask him. Beseech God and say with faith: 'O Master, forgive me my forgetfulness and negligence; and by the supplication of my Holy Elder and in the goodness of Thy compassion, guide me according to Thy Will; save me and protect me from everything evil and wicked.'"

E. From the *Gerontikon*

1. The disciple of a great Elder was once undergoing warfare with thoughts of fornication; overcome by them, he returned to the world and got engaged. The Elder was grieved and prayed to God: "O Lord Jesus Christ, do not allow Thy servant to be defiled." No sooner did the brother fall into bed with the woman, than he gave up his spirit, without suffering defilement.

2. There was once an Elder who lived in a cave in the Thebaid; he had a disciple of proven virtue. Every evening, the Elder was in the habit of giving him beneficial advice. After offering him this advice, he would give him a blessing to go to sleep. One time, the Elder was visited by some pious lay people, who were familiar with his ascetic way of life and who had come to bring him some gifts. When they departed, the Elder sat down again, as usual, to instruct his disciple. But while he was talking to him, the Elder fell asleep. The disciple waited for him to wake up and to give him a blessing to leave.

He sat for a long time, without the Elder waking up; and, although his thoughts bothered him, the disciple did not leave. As many as seven times, his thoughts urged him to go, but he resisted them and did not depart. Well into the night, the Elder awoke. When he saw his disciple still sitting there, he said to him: "Why have you not left yet?" "Because you did not give me a blessing to leave," replied the disciple. "And why did you not wake me?" the Elder asked a second time. "I did not dare to nudge you, in case I should startle you," the disciple responded.

They then arose and said the morning office. After the office, the Elder gave his disciple a blessing to leave, and he sat by himself. He fell into a trance. He saw someone who showed him a glorious place, in

which there was a throne of exceeding splendor, and on the throne seven shining crowns. The Elder asked the man showing them to him: "Whose are these?" "Your disciple's," he answered. "Both this place and the throne God has appointed to him," the unknown man continued, "on account of his obedience. He received the seven crowns last night."

As soon as he recovered from the trance, the Elder called his disciple and said to him: "Tell me, what were you doing last night?" "Forgive me, Elder," replied the disciple, "I was not doing anything." The Elder, thinking that it was out of humility that he was not answering, persisted yet again. "I am not giving you a blessing to leave," he said to him, "unless you tell me what you were doing or what you were thinking last night."

Since he was not aware of having done anything, the brother was perplexed and did not know what to say. So he told his Father: "Abba, I did not do anything; all I remember is how my thoughts pestered me seven times to leave without your blessing; but I did not leave."

When the Elder heard this, he understood the meaning of the vision: that every time the disciple resisted his thoughts and did not leave, he was crowned by God. He told his disciple nothing of what he had seen. However, he related it to some spiritual men for their benefit, so that we might know that God grants us shining crowns even for small labors; and also, that we might learn, at the same time, that we should be diligent in seeking the blessings of our spiritual Fathers and should not dare to do anything, or be separated in any way from them, without their blessing and instruction.

F. From St. Ephraim

Honor your spiritual Father with all your might, and do not render inefficacious the counsels of him who begat you in the Lord; for in this way, the evil demons will never prevail over you. According to the Scriptures: "Whosoever honoreth his Father will take joy in his children; and when he maketh his prayer, he shall be heard. He that glorifieth his Father shall have a long life, and shall find Grace at the end of his life. Honor thy Father in word and deed, that a blessing from him may come upon thee. Glory not in the dishonor of thy Father; for thy Father's dishonor is no glory unto thee; for the glory of a man is from the honor of his Father" (Ecclesiasticus 3:5-6; 1:13; 3:8, 10-11).

If you live with a great Elder, do not only recount his virtues, but also emulate his life; for this will benefit you. Show your affinity with

him not only by your words, but also by your deeds.

* See Hypothesis XXXIII, Section A, above, and elsewhere—*Trans.*

** Ravenna is a city in Italy on the Adriatic Sea, which in the reign of Honorios became the capital of the Western Roman Empire [where he was known by the Latin form of his name: "Honorius"—*Trans.*]. In 539 A.D., Justinian occupied it through his general, Belissarios, and since that time important Byzantine monuments have been built therein.

*** When he was being persecuted by idolaters, the Divine Gregory, together with the disciple and Deacon of his mentioned in the present passage, took refuge on this mountain, which is situated near Neocæsarea. (Concerning this, see the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. XI, pp. 515-516.) Neocæsarea is a city in Cappadocia, Asia Minor, on the Black Sea.

**** The word "*parathesis*" had, among the monks of that period, the meaning which the words "*eulogia*" ["blessing"—*Trans.*] or "*entole*" ["command" or "order"—*Trans.*] have among us today. For an "*hypotaktikos*" ["disciple"—*Trans.*], the command of his Superior is a sacred instruction, which he must carry out without delay and with all precision and diligence. When a monk receives an order to discharge some task, he receives the blessing of his Superior, simultaneously kissing the hand of the one who seals him with the sign of the Precious Cross for the favorable outcome of the order entrusted to him. In this case, the word "*eulogia*" means the prayer of the Superior for him to God, into Whose mighty protection a Superior entrusts one who receives a command, that he may be preserved unharmed from all danger and may bring the command entrusted to him to an auspicious conclusion.

Hypothesis XL

That one should not lightly go out of, or withdraw from, the monastery in which he has promised, in the sight of God, to remain until the end of his life; for the Fathers did not even go out of their cells, in which they found great benefit.

A. From Palladios

1. On Mount Nitria, there was once a monk called Nathaniel. He had such patience, that he never violated the rule which he had set for himself, after the initial mockery that he endured from a demon. Long ago, the following had befallen him: sitting in his cell, he felt lethargic and could not accomplish any spiritual work. He departed from that place and built another cell closer to a village. He had spent three or four months there, when one night he heard a din outside his cell caused by someone holding an ox-hide drum* of the kind used by public executioners. The individual who was banging on the drum had the appearance of a ragged soldier. In vexation, the Blessed Nathaniel said to him: "Who are you, carrying on like this in my lodging?" "I am the one who drove you from your first cell," he replied. "Now I have come to chase you away from this one, too."

As soon as the blessed man realized that the Devil had made a fool of him, he returned to his first cell. He spent thirty-seven entire years inside that first cell, without stepping across the threshold to go out. During that time, he warred against the demon, who, in order to force him to leave his cell, showed him such things as one could not recount. The Blessed Nathaniel resisted him valiantly until the end, and he reposed in that cell.

2. Thoughts of vainglory once troubled St. Makarios the Great of Alexandria, trying to drive him out of his cell and suggesting that he go to Rome, supposedly by Providence, in order to benefit the afflicted there; for through him, the Grace of the Lord worked exceptionally well against evil spirits. When these thoughts bothered him intensely, and he did not listen to them, they assailed him all the more vehemently

and prompted him to leave. The Saint then fell on the threshold of his cell and, stretching his feet out towards the exit, said to the demons of vainglory: "Pull me and drag me, you demons, if you can; for with my feet I am going nowhere. If you can carry me where you say, I will go; in any case, I swear that I shall remain stretched out like this until the evening, and unless you move me, I will not listen to you." He remained, unmoved, in that position until well into the night.

The following night, these thoughts disturbed him with greater force. So, the Saint stood up, and taking a basket that held two measures (*modia*),** he filled it with sand, put it on his shoulder, and walked around in the desert. On the road, he encountered Theosebios, the Governor of Antioch,*** who said to him: "What are you carrying there, Abba? Let me take up your burden, so that you will not get tired." "I am molesting him who molests me," replied the Saint, "for when I am relaxed, he tempts me with the thought of going away." After walking around like this for some time, he returned to his cell, having exhausted his body.

3. Once, when I was feeling very sluggish, I visited Abba Mark and said to him: "Abba Mark, what should I do, for I am afflicted by thoughts that tell me: 'You are doing no good, leave this place'?" The most holy Mark replied to me: "Tell your thoughts: 'I am guarding the walls for the sake of Christ.'"

B. From the Life of St. Evthymios

In the Lavra of St. Evthymios, two of the brothers, Maron and Clematios, unable to endure the hard life and regimen of the Lavra, agreed together to leave secretly by night. They communicated this plan to each other and thought it through. But He Who reveals hidden things to those who are dedicated to Him, saying through Isaiah, "thou shalt no more have the sun for a light by day, nor shall the rising of the moon lighten thy night, but the Lord shall be thine everlasting light" (Isaiah 60:19), disclosed this to his servant, St. Evthymios, in the following way:

One day, when the wondrous Evthymios was by himself, it was revealed to him that the Evil One was placing reins over Maron and Clematios, whom he saw as though they were before him, and that he was dragging them into a most fearful snare. He immediately perceived the plot and summoned the brothers Maron and Clematios; he exhorted, admonished, encouraged, and instructed them, conversing with them at

great length about patience, saying that vigilance and caution are always needed. He then gave them the examples of Adam and Job: the former broke a commandment in Paradise, whereas the latter acquired every kind of virtue on his dungheap. He also told them that the monk must not accept thoughts suggested by the Evil One, whether of grief, hatred, boredom, or withdrawal to another place. We should not accept these thoughts even for a moment—the Saint went on—but should reject them and banish them with all of our strength, lest the Evil One trip us up unawares through some trick of his, and cast us into a fall worthy of tears.

If someone thinks that he cannot practice virtue here, let him not suppose that if he goes elsewhere he will succeed more easily in his purpose; for the accomplishment of good does not depend on the nature of the place, but on our intention. For monastics, what is contrary to this is wrong and can lessen the intensity of their efforts and make them unfruitful in virtue, just as a plant can never produce fruit when it is continually transplanted. In order to provide surer confirmation of his words, the Saint related to them the lives of some Egyptian Elders.

He told the story of a brother who lived in a *cœnobion* in Egypt and who was constantly getting angry, infuriated, and upset—whose mouth was filled with bitterness and anger. One day, feeling sorry about this, the thought came to him that, because of this anger and because he so easily became upset, he was his own enemy, such that, if he should ever happen to do anything good, he would run the risk of destroying this as well. So, he persuaded himself to leave the *cœnobion* and lead a life of solitude, because the desert, as he imagined, could greatly help him to acquire tranquillity and calm. He reckoned that since there would be nobody under his authority against whom he could be irate and angry, the grievous fire of anger so abruptly kindled in him would gradually be quenched, and that he would in the future become mild-mannered and filled with tranquillity and peace.

After entertaining these thoughts, he forthwith departed from the *cœnobion* to live in solitude and stillness. Once, filling a cup with water to meet some need, he tried to put it on the ground; when, by the activity of the Devil, the cup overturned—which happened not once, but two or three times—the brother became angry and, overcome by a fit of wrath, threw the cup on the ground and smashed it, which provoked the Enemy to unrestrained laughter.

Clematios found this story amusing and began to laugh heartily; but the Godly Evthymios, observing him carefully, said to him: "Per-

haps, brother, you, too, have been incited to this by some evil demon. And this is why you are laughing so shamelessly and recklessly, whereas you should be weeping and sighing, in order to benefit from the consolation that comes from God. Or perhaps there is no truth in Him Who will judge us in the future, when He characterizes as blessed those who mourn now in this world, because, as He says, they will be comforted (St. Matthew 5:4), but as miserable those who laugh now in this world and do not look after themselves (St. Luke 6:25). Furthermore, when a monk speaks without moderation or is aroused by anything whatever, he shows that he is utterly ignorant, just as he does when he speaks without being told. For the Fathers call outspokenness the mother of all of the passions in general."

With these words, St. Evthymios chided Clematios and retired into his inner cell. Clematios was immediately overtaken by Divine retribution; after falling face forward to the ground, he was overcome by terror and shivered all over.

As soon as Dometianos saw Clematios stretched out in this distressing condition, marvelling, on the one hand, at how harmoniously gentleness and strictness were mingled in the character of St. Evthymios, and feeling pain, on the other hand, at the suffering that Brother Clematios was undergoing, he gathered some of the Fathers of the *cœnobion* to entreat the Saint to intercede for Clematios; along with them, he brought Maron before St. Evthymios.

The Saint, being by nature very merciful, and not wishing to show disrespect for their entreaty, went with the Fathers to Clematios, who was still stretched out. He freed him from his terror with the sign of the Cross and caused the shivering to cease; in this way Clematios was completely cured of his affliction. After this miraculous healing, the Saint said to Clematios:

"Be sure not to disdain the teachings and precepts of the Fathers, but become all eyes, as we hear of the Cherubim, so that you may examine yourself from every angle as one who is forever passing through the midst of many snares."

After counseling and instructing Clematios with these words, and strengthening the others with the example of Clematios, he gave the latter his blessing to go and to live peacefully by himself in his cell.

C. From the Life of St. Synkletike

The Blessed Synkletike said: "If you are in a *cœnobion*, do not change

your location, for if you do, you will cause yourself great harm. Just as a bird who rises from her eggs makes them addled and barren, so also the virgin or monk who moves from place to place freezes and mortifies the faith within him."

D. From the Life of St. Theodora

The monastery in which St. Theodora lived, where it was believed that she was a monk, once experienced a shortage of grain. The Abbot ordered the blessed one to take the camels and go to the city to buy grain. She was also given permission, in the event that she was unable to return to the monastery in the evening, to spend the night in the Monastery of Enaton and to let the camels rest there as well. And indeed, as she was returning from the city, she saw that the sun was setting and, in accordance with the instruction that she had received, sought to give the camels some rest in the Monastery of Enaton. After being shown the place where the animals were left, she herself lay down at the feet of the camels.

Thenceforth, the Evil One began to make war against her. He aroused the passion of lust in a young woman who was staying at the monastery, since she was related to some of the monks. In her excited state, the young woman, believing from all that she had seen that the blessed one was a man, proposed that they sleep together, with no shame whatsoever either on her face or in her soul. When the young woman, goaded on by her passion, saw that St. Theodora was paying no attention to her words, but preferred to remain stretched out on the bare ground next to the camels, and being unable to quench her sinful desire, she then gave herself to one of the men sleeping there—himself a traveller and one of the transients who were accustomed to lodging overnight at the monastery.

At daybreak, the man who had collaborated in the sinful act departed from the monastery, and the Saint likewise returned to her monastery. But as time went on, it gradually became apparent that the girl's belly was swelling. In response to the persistent demands of her relatives—that she tell them how this had happened—she said that the monk Theodore, from the Monastery of Oktokaidekaton [Theodore's monastery, that is—*Trans.*], had deflowered her. The monks, without any investigation, at once believed her words; for the Enemy, who had devised temptations for the Saint and had instructed the girl to say these things, also made the monks believe her story.

In the wake of this, they went with hue and cry to the monastery where the Saint lived and shouted: "Your monk Theodore did not hesitate to perpetrate this foul deed!" The Abbot then asked Theodora whether she had, in fact, committed such an abominable act, and she replied that she was not aware of being at all guilty in this regard. The monks of Enaton then returned to their monastery. When the child, the offspring of the sinful union, was born, they took it and deposited it at the monastery where St. Theodora lived.

And what happened after this? It was believed that St. Theodora was the father of the infant, and without saying anything in her defense, she accepted the condemnation of guilt; together with the infant, she was banished from the monastery compound. She became the child's nurse and was compelled to look after it like a mother, nourishing it with sheep's milk and making clothing for it from the wool which she would beg from shepherds. But what soul could accept such serious slander? What hand would not be weighed down by so heavy a service?

Seven years passed, during which time her womanly nature was subjected to hardship—oh, eyes of God, that see all things! Slandered by a malevolent accusation, she was expelled from her monastery, as if she had willingly committed an awful act and now wanted to cover it by her self-imposed shame. Along with all of these torments went her manner of life: that is, she ate wild herbs and drank water, which she drew from the lake as she could—albeit, one should rather say that she drank the tears that ran day and night from her eyes; indeed, she put into practice the verse of the Psalm: "For I...mingled my drink with weeping" (Psalm 101:10).

Thusly, therefore, did her body waste away; and since she took no care for her physical needs, her nails had grown, resembling the talons of the most savage beasts. Her hair was shaggy and dry (and was left unkempt), like wild weeds; her face, exposed as it was to the rays of the sun, became darker and darker and her eyelids had become distorted from her protracted vigils. And yet, even though she became the worse for wear in the face of such misfortunes and was beaten down not only by the snow-showers, but also by temptations—for all that, she resolved not to withdraw from the monastery even for a short time. She had set up her hut at the outer gate of the monastery and stayed there, gladly preferring to be an outcast there, in keeping with the Prophet David (Psalm 83:11). Who can even say how many other temptations the Devil brought on her in that place, without, however, being able to defeat her?

On one occasion, the Devil impersonated her husband, lingering

around her with deceitful words and begging her to return to her house; but with the sign of the Cross and prayer, she caused him to vanish. On another occasion, Satan presented her with the illusion that all the wild beasts of the desert were attacking her; once again, by means of prayer she dispelled these apparitions like smoke.

On yet another occasion, it appeared to her that hordes of men had set upon her and inflicted unbearable injuries, so that she was left half-dead. From time to time, the Devil would put various foods and large quantities of gold before her. In the end, he could not succeed in bending her resolve by any of these machinations. From all of this, he who boasted that he could annihilate the earth and the sea now understood that St. Theodora was unassailable and invincible, and for this reason he decided to break off his warfare against her.

After seven years had passed, the monks of the Enaton Lavra went and begged the Abbot to receive back the Saint (whom, as we have said, they believed to be a man) and to number "him" with the remainder of the monks, because —they said—it was sufficient punishment for "him" to remain at the entrance of the monastery for seven continuous years. To this appeal of theirs, they added that they had learned from a Divine vision that God had already forgiven Theodore. Yielding to these entreaties, the Abbot freed Theodora from her unjust sentence, after enjoining that she stay in the most secluded cell; no one was to approach her, nor was she to be assigned to any duties in the monastery.

Two further years passed, during which the Saint lived in isolation, enclosed in her cell, with greater abstinence and more fervent prayers. In this period of two years, there was such a great drought in that region, that the wells and reservoirs of the *cœnobion* did not have so much as a drop of water; so, the Abbot, since he had ascertained, from all that he saw and heard, that the blessed one had received the gift of miraculous intervention, sent for her and ordered her to take a jar and go to the well to fetch water. For her part—having learned to obey the Abbot without subjecting the orders given by him to any scrutiny, or putting off carrying them out—she promptly did as she was instructed; and she immediately brought up the jar, filled with water. From that moment on, all of the wells seemed to be full of water.

After several days had elapsed, she took the child and shut herself up with him in her cell; throughout the night, she counseled him concerning perfection according to Christ. While giving this advice, she committed her soul into the hands of God with thanksgiving. Thereupon, the child began to weep and lament, filling the cell with his cries.

All of those nearby understood that she had died, on account of these lamentations, and they reported this to the Abbot. As soon as the Abbot heard the news, he related to the monks who had come to inform him about Theodora's death a dream that he had.

"It seems," he said, "that I saw two men raising me up to an immeasurable height. There I saw a company of Angels, and a voice reverberated in my ears. 'Observe,' it said, 'how many good things have been prepared for Theodora, my bride.' At the same time, I saw a couch, which was guarded by an Angel, and a bridal chamber of indescribable beauty. Since I had an intense desire to find out what bridal chamber it was that I saw, and who the woman was for whom they had made all these preparations, I was in the process of asking my guides about all of this when, suddenly, I caught sight of a choir of Prophets, Apostles, and Martyrs. In the middle of that choir, there was a woman, dressed in radiant garments, who entered the bridal chamber and appeared to sit on the couch.

"Those who were escorting that wondrous woman said that it was the soul of Abba Theodore, to whom the sin of fornication had been falsely imputed and who chose to be persecuted—for seven whole years, in exile from the monastery—and to be considered the father of a stranger's child, nurturing and educating it, than to reveal what sex she really was, and thereby to free herself from such great shame and hardship. 'For this reason, as you see'—the soul's escorts continued—'she was counted worthy of such splendor.' When I saw these things, sleep left my eyes and I began to weep for my sins."

After concluding this narrative, he immediately went with the other monks to the Saint's cell. When they arrived, they saw her who was truly alive, dead; on drawing near, they shed tears over that sacred body. The Abbot then sent for the monks of Enaton, in whose presence he uncovered several members of the sacred body, while he said to them: "Behold, this most marvelous sight: how the female sex deceived the prince of darkness in such a way."

Naturally, they were all astounded by what they saw, and they were gripped by fear, when they pondered with how much toil those held captive by bodily passions must struggle; and their tears followed upon this fear. Towards evening, when they had already finished their lamentations, they buried that much-suffering and most sacred body with Psalms, hymns, and the requisite funeral honors.

E. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder said: "If, in the place in which one finds himself, he attempts to do something good, but is unable to do so, let him not think that he can accomplish it in another place."

2. Amma Theodora said that there was a monk who, bothered by a multitude of temptations, said to himself: "Leave this place." When he had fetched his sandals, he saw another man putting on his sandals, too, who said to him: "Are you not leaving because of me? I will go before you, wherever you intend to go." This was the demon who tempted him.

F. From St. Ephraim

1. I desire to remind you, my brothers, about those who undertake excessive feats and fall into fearful dangers. They pay no heed to Holy Scripture, which says: "[One should] not think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but [should] think soberly" (Romans 12:3). In another place it is said: "Be not very just, neither be very wise, lest thou be confounded" (Ecclesiastes 7:17).

For it so happened in our days that certain brothers abandoned their cells and exiled themselves to a trackless, barren, and completely waterless region. These brothers had previously been given many warnings by the Fathers, but they were not persuaded by their admonitions, saying: "We are going there in order to live like cattle." But when they reached the most arid desert region, being surrounded on all sides by the wilderness, where they found not the slightest material comfort, they began to be sorely vexed. They then started to return to their monasteries, but could not reach them; exhausted by the lack of provisions, thirst, and the excessive heat, they fell to the ground, ready to expire.

By Divine Providence, however, some travelers who were journeying through that desert found some of them, who were almost at death's door; after putting them on their animals, they conveyed them to their monasteries, where they remained sick for quite a while. Thereafter, they learned from experience not to follow their own will. The rest, who were not discovered, gave up their spirits in the places where they fell down in exhaustion, and their bodies were devoured by birds and wild beasts.

Many others, having been enticed by prideful thoughts, still expose themselves to fearsome risks when they depart—supposedly for the sake of asceticism—to regions that are totally barren and waterless.

Some of them distance themselves from other monks, since they do not want to show submission or cannot endure serving their brothers; and thus, they fall to the same danger. Others, again, do not like working with their hands. Yet others are puffed up with vainglory and seek the praises of those who hear about them for supposedly succeeding in becoming anchorites, without considering the toils and the difficulties that await them. All of these monks, by trusting in their own thoughts, fall into fearful and miserable dangers.

We should not be heedlessly enticed by our volitions and desires, brethren; it is preferable that we humble ourselves before our neighbor with the love of God, and that each of us know precisely his own limitations. Perhaps someone will raise the following objection: "In that case, how is it that we find some Fathers who have practiced this virtue?" Let him take into account that the Fathers never did anything recklessly or haphazardly. Let everyone be of prudent mind through the example of the Fathers.

2. It is told of Abba Makarios that he used to say: "When I was living in my cell in Sketis, I was bothered by tempting thoughts. 'Go,' they urged me, 'to the depths of the desert and attend to what you see there.' I remained fighting against these thoughts for five years, saying to myself: 'Perhaps it is from the demons.'"

Do you see the prudence of a holy man? Was he perhaps seduced at once, or did he run off? Did he perhaps accept the thoughts? None of these. He remained where he was, examining the thoughts attentively. He fasted, kept vigil, and prayed, out of fear that the thoughts had come from the demons. We, however, when we are presented with a thought, lose control of ourselves and go wild; and not only do we fail to examine our thoughts with prayerful attention, but we do not even humble ourselves by seeking advice from others. This is why we are easily taken captive by the Devil.

"After that," Abba Makarios continued, "since the thought persisted, I actually went into the desert; and there I found a lake and an island in the middle of it. The animals in the desert went to this lake to drink. In the midst of these animals, I saw two naked men. After we had talked a little, I asked them: 'How can I become a monk?' 'If one does not renounce all the things of this world, he cannot become a monk,' they replied to me. 'I am weak, and cannot do what you do,' I said to them a second time. 'If you cannot do what we do,' they replied to me again, 'then stay in your cell and weep for your sins.'"

Oh, the humility of this man who revered God! Oh, the prudence of a virtuous soul! He who excelled in such great and noteworthy feats did not judge himself worthy of this undertaking, whereas we, who are nothing and who do not have the capacity for toil, out of presumption and self-satisfaction attempt things beyond our limits, thereby provoking our Lord and God, which is certainly something to be feared. Woe to the man who trusts in his own strength, or asceticism, or intelligence, and not in God; for strength and power come only from God.

3. Let us examine the life of St. Anthony carefully, and we shall see that this Saint did everything under the guidance of Divine revelation. Did he not, however, live in a monastery? Did he not use clothing? Did he not eat bread? Did he not work with his own hands? Did he not acquire disciples, who wrapped his body in a shroud, after his death, and buried it? Indeed, all of the Fathers, with very few exceptions, lived in this way; let us also emulate *their* lives, and let us journey on the middle and royal way, without deviating either to the right or to the left.

4. Everyone, therefore, should complete with great humility and patience the task that he has set out to accomplish. If he is unstable in his habits and thoughts, and roams about from place to place and from task to task according to his own will, the fruits of his works will be unripe—if, indeed, such a person is able to produce any fruit at all. This is because the Evil One does not attack everyone in the same way, but meticulously investigates the point at which he can most easily make war on each person. After he has discovered this weak point, he then suggests the appropriate thoughts to him, as the guarantee of a supposedly more perfect life.

The Devil causes one who lives in a *cœnobion* to have fantasies about the desert—which was vast in the region where ancient monks dwelt—and goads him to seek after the strictest asceticism and the most arduous way of life. Yet he advises the one who dwells in the desert to flee that place, because it is supposedly dry, providing no consolation at all and offering not even the smallest amenity to those who are weaker. And these thoughts he implants constantly in the mind of the hermit. He incites him to begin building a tower, until he gets discouraged with this and says to himself, "It is better for me to build a column." Then, after working for a little while on that, he changes his mind again: "It is preferable for me to build a cell," he says. And no sooner does he reach a mid-point in this job, than he finds it burdensome and leaves it half-

finished, wearying himself to no avail and accomplishing nothing useful. In this way, the monk, by not remaining in one place, is unable to yield perfect fruit, which is the product of spiritual prudence.

5. The enemy also suggests various other thoughts to cœnobitic monks. He often says to each cœnobite:

"What more are you doing here than you did in the world? There, too, you worked and ate, like the irrational animals. And what kind of virtue is this, that you only work and eat? See, the warfare of fornication is raised against you through food; but then again, if you do not eat, it is not possible for you to endure hard work. It would be better for you to leave this place and go into the inner desert, if you wish to be saved; for 'the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof' (Psalm 23:1). Take a knife with you, so that you can pick plants to eat, as did the monks of old, who succeeded in pleasing God. What need is there for you to live here, where there are scandals, slanders, and various other problems which should go unmentioned?

"If you depart from here, you will be freed from all of this; but if you do not want to leave for the inner desert, then go to another place, where there are no scandals. You are not without a place to go to; for whom has God ever abandoned, that He would abandon you—and all the more since you are in search of what is good? In that place you will learn another skill, from which you will earn sufficient money to give alms to the poor from your labors." Many such thoughts does the Evil One suggest to the brother from the right, so that the brother will think that he is being led to greater advancement, if he assents to these thoughts.

This, however, is a snare: Let the monk withdraw from the *cœnobion* and from the protection and care of the Abbot—let him wander like a sheep far from the flock—and he will become a ready meal for the wolf. If he assents to his tempting thought and brings it into fruition by departing for the inner desert, he will at first be sorely vexed by hunger; next, the demons will agitate him with timidity, presenting many fearful things and torments to his mind.

In the wake of this, the brother begins to repent and to say in his mind: "I fared well when I lived with my brothers; what demon deluded me into going out into this terrible desert, where many frightful wild beasts dwell? What shall I do, wretch that I am, if I fall into the hands of barbarians? How I fear, lest I fall in with brigands or some wild beast should encounter me!

"Besides, there are many demons in these places, for this region is a desert; and how will I be able to live all by myself in this desert, where unclean spirits are constantly present, especially now that I have grown accustomed to living with many brothers? In truth, if a man who lives by himself in the desert is not vigilant, he will become mentally deranged, as has happened to quite a few. And what use will it be if I die an evil death in this desert?"

After the brother has struggled against these thoughts, if he is really prudent, he returns to his *cœnobion*. In this effort of his, he will have to despise every feeling of shame that the demons inspire in him by saying to him: "If you return to your brothers, they will think you impetuous and unfit, like a soldier who flees from his military post out of fear." But the brother should not give any credence to the demons; on the contrary, he should confront them with the following words: "It will not be as you say, O wicked demons, but they will welcome me, rather, as an experienced struggler and as one who has put into practice the words of the Apostle: 'Prove all things; hold fast that which is good' (I Thessalonians 5:21). This is what I did: I tested both ways of life, and I found that it is good and pleasing for spiritual brothers to live together, as it is written: 'A brother helped by a brother is as a strong and lofty city' (Proverbs 18:19)."

The Abbot and the brothers of the *cœnobion* will gratefully welcome the brother who returns in this way to the community, because the Lord said: "Support the weak" (I Thessalonians 5:14). But if, out of shame, this brother does not return to his community, there is nothing to prevent him from giving credence to the demons and returning to the world. "In the world, too," the demons tell him, "if you are willing to fear God, you will be saved; or do you perhaps think that only hermits are saved?" These are the ideas that the Devil proffers in his endeavor to persuade the monk to return to his own vomit.

All of these things happen to one who has separated himself from the *cœnobion*, if he goes into the desert. If, again, he goes to settle in a cell near the Elders, the Elders will take care of him, for the Lord's sake, bringing him whatever they can. But when the brother has installed himself in his cell, he begins to think: "We must work, in order to provide a livelihood."

He then begins to be bothered with many things, so that he may live completely alone; for just as the *cœnobion* appears difficult to one who is used to living by himself, so also solitude causes great and intolerable distress to one who is used to the common life. Afflicted by tempta-

tions and distraction, he begins to repent and to say: "Look here, I am occupied with so many matters that I cannot find even a short period of time in which to do my rule of prayer, contending as I do with everyday cares, the thoughts arising from them, and work. But when I lived in the *cœnobion*, I was free from all of these things; I devoted my concern entirely to my rule and my small amount of handiwork.

"And now, what am I, in my misfortune, to do? All of these things have happened because of my sins. If I had listened to the advice of my spiritual Father, I would not have fallen into so many great afflictions, which have taken me captive. Truly, there is nothing more pernicious than disobedience; for it was disobedience that cast Adam out of Paradise and me from my *cœnobion*." After these thoughts, the repentant brother will either return to his community or, perhaps, go back to the world, in which case he will perish.

If he returns to his community and they accept him back, then, if he is beset by thoughts about scandals and the outcry against him, let him say to himself: "'Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth' [*cf.* Psalm 140:3] and 'Turn away mine eyes, that I behold not vanity' (Psalm 118:37)." With these thoughts, you will overcome both problems: the outcry through silence, and the scandals through guarding the eyes. For if we do not overcome these two problems—the outcry and the scandals—wherever we may go, we will carry our adversaries inside our souls.

6. When the Evil One wants to snatch yet another brother away from the monastery, he will put different thoughts in his mind, saying to him: "Look, your disorderly conduct is well known here, and all the brothers are aware of your negligence; this is why you cannot live any longer in this place. For even if you yearn for virtue, the men with whom you live are the very ones who know what kind of person you have been from the beginning. Go somewhere else, where people do not know you, and make a new start in the spiritual life, and in this way you will be pleasing to God and men."

Now listen, brother: Are you going to leave your spiritual Father and the brothers, in whose presence you made your monastic promises to God, because of derision on the part of men? You should call to mind the words of the Prophet: "My soul hath expected reproach and misery, ...and because for Thy sake I have borne reproach, shame hath covered my face" (Psalm 68:21,8). When you reflect on these words of the Prophet, you will also endure dishonor and contempt with joy. For the Lord says in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you,

and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake" (St. Matthew 5:11). The derision which a man withstands for the Lord's sake contributes greatly to the cleansing of that man's sins. Let the Prophet persuade you regarding the truth of this with his words: "For the Lord remembered us in our low estate, ...and hath redeemed us from our enemies" (Psalm 135:23-24).

Furthermore, do what is good, and you will see that the Lord will unfailingly turn the attitude of your brothers towards you to the good. Remain firm in the place where the Enemy attacks you and stand up straight and fight him, so that your accomplishments may be revealed before those who are familiar with your shortcomings; in this way, you will receive great glory from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who said: "But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first" (St. Matthew 19:30). In other words, when a soiled garment is washed, it will no longer be set aside with the dirty ones; if anyone, out of envy or evil jealously, calls what is clean dirty, he will have no credence, for the appearance of the garment will contradict him. As a well-known and beautiful verse says: "Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow" (Psalm 50:9).

7. To one who has reached old age in a *cœnobion*, the Enemy of our souls frequently inspires the thought of leaving, and says: "You have spent so many years in the monastery serving Christ; but now you have grown old and you can no longer fulfill the rules of the community. You do not even have the ability to do anything, because your body has become weak; from now on, you will be humiliated by both small and great. Moreover, you need respite on account of your old age.

"Depart from here, therefore, and live in another place, so that you may be at peace. God will send you food there, either through the charity of Christians or through some other means; for why should you have to undergo torment and mockery in order to eat? And why should you eat, just to be harassed every day in this way, like the wicked servant, and put up with submitting to those who are younger than you?" These and other such thoughts does the Evil One suggest to the older monk, in his desire to separate him, after so many years, from the brotherhood and the place where he has grown old and to show him, in his old age, to be a man without patience. If the old man happens to be feeble in mind, he will immediately change his mind, and the temptation will cause him to act, just as a breeze fans a fire of burning wood.

If, however, the old man proves to be sound in mind, then he will

conquer Satan: "You will not delude me in my old age, O Devil," he will tell the Evil One, "for after patiently enduring difficulties when I was young, all the more will I endure them now that the time is approaching when, through my bodily death, I will be with Christ. For an old man awaits nothing other than liberation from this earthly life, and for those who are younger I ought to be an example, not of impatience, but of patience. If the pious Elder Eleazar, although he was subjected to such torments and his members were burned, did not change his mind, but became an example of patience for the young, who looked to him and who themselves valiantly despised the tortures of the tyrants, all the more should I endure, since I, indeed, am not suffering any of these torments.

"If I endure a little bother and the slightest disdain, I will not be an example of apostasy for the young, but of patience and steadfastness; for I think of myself as a slave whom my Lord brought and entrusted to the Abbot of the monastery in which I live, and because of this, it is not in my power to leave whenever I wish. Why do you afflict me—you evil thoughts—even over my small handiwork?

"If people in the world labor with great gusto, not only by day, but also by night, for the perishable goods of this world, and concern themselves with wives, children, accommodations, and rent, and undergo so many hardships, all the more should I joyfully endure my small toil, since, indeed, I have been freed from all of these anxieties by the Grace of Christ; for 'My yoke is easy, and My burden is light' (St. Matthew 11:30). For this reason 'depart from me, ye evil-doers, and I will search out the commandments of my God' (Psalm 118:115)." In this way, with the aid of Divine Grace, he will persevere in his original purpose and will be made perfect in the place where he grew old; and thus, he will win an unfading crown.

G. From St. Maximos

1. A foolish man, led astray by the passions, at times becomes wholly unsettled, since he is moved by anger and without thinking hastens to leave his brothers; but in time, he is warmed by his desire for them and, feeling regret for leaving, runs back to their company. The intelligent man does the exact opposite in both instances: in the case of anger, he cuts off the causes of his disturbance and frees himself from feeling grief towards his brothers, while whenever he is overtaken by the desire for senseless wrath or aimless encounters, he controls himself.

2. At the time of temptations do not leave your monastery, but endure with courage the waves of thoughts, and especially those of grief and boredom; for tested in this way, by Providence, through afflictions, you will have sure hope in God; but if you leave, you will be found worthless, unmanly, and unstable. The man who, at the time of trial, does not display forbearance at the events that befall him has not yet acquired perfect love, nor even a profound knowledge of Divine Providence, but cuts himself off from the love of his spiritual brothers. The purpose of Divine Providence is to reunite, through right Faith and spiritual love, those who have become separated by evil in various ways. This is precisely why the Savior suffered: in order to gather together into one the children of God that had been scattered abroad by sin (St. John 11:52).

3. He who does not endure or bear afflictions, or accept sorrows, or put up with difficulties, assuredly strays far from Divine love and the Providence of God; for love makes a man long-suffering and good. If one is faint-hearted in the face of the troubles that befall him, and for this reason bears malice towards those who have grieved him, ceasing to love them and being estranged from them, how will he not fall away from the purpose of Divine Providence?

4. Has a brother been the occasion of trial for you, and has your distress at this led you to hatred for him? Do not be overcome by hatred, but overcome hatred by love. This is how you will overcome hatred: by praying sincerely to God for him and accepting his apology, or by mollifying him yourself through this apology, reckoning yourself responsible for the trial, enduring patiently until the cloud has passed. He is long-suffering who awaits the end of a trial with composure and waits upon the glory of his perseverance.

5. A long-suffering man is very wise; for in all that happens to him, he looks to that recompense which he awaits from God—and it is for this reason that he endures sorrows. The goal of our struggle in Christ is eternal life, as the Divine Apostle says: "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent" (St. John 17:3). Be sure not to think a spiritual or virtuous brother of days past base and wicked because of some hatred that may have been engendered in you by the influence of the Evil One. But with the power of love, which is always long-suffering, take account

of the kindness that he displayed yesterday, so as to cast today's hatred out of your soul.

6. Do not disparage, today, as wicked and vile the one whom yesterday you praised as good and extolled as virtuous, when your love for him is transformed into hatred, using your brother's censure of you as a justification for the evil hatred in you. On the contrary, you should persist in the same praises for him, even if your soul is overcome by anguish, and you will thus easily return to the same saving love. Do not adulterate the praise due to your brother in conversations with other brothers on account of the sorrow that is hidden in your soul, mixing reproach into your words without realizing it. But use pure praise in your encounters and pray sincerely for him, as though you were praying for yourself; and, thereby, you will receive speedy deliverance from destructive hatred.

And even if the brother, tempted by the Devil, persists in maligning you, do not in the least retreat from a loving disposition, but repel the demon who vexes your mind. You will not depart from this love if you praise, when you are maligned, and think favorably about him who seeks to harm you. This is the path indicated by the philosophy of Christ, and he who does not follow it does not abide with Christ.

7. Do not goad your brother with insinuations, lest you receive the same treatment from him—in which case the disposition of love will be lost on both sides. If you think that he has grieved you in some way, go and confront him with the boldness that love inspires and reprove him, so that you may eradicate the cause of your grief and that the two of you may be freed from upset and sorrow of soul. Do not say, "I do not hate my brother," only with your lips, when, indeed, you are unwilling even to hear his name. Listen to what Moses says: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and thou shalt not bear sin on his account" (Leviticus 19:17). When you have been reconciled and are at peace, do not call to mind the words of your brother which once grieved you, whether these distressing words were uttered in person or you were subsequently informed of them by someone else, lest you be overcome by the thought of remembering wrongs and resume destructive hatred against your brother.

8. When the rational soul nurtures hatred against a human being, it is not possible for it to be at peace with God, Who gave commandments

like this one: "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive your trespasses" (St. Matthew 6:15). If someone is unwilling to be reconciled and at peace with you, guard yourself against hatred by sincerely praying for him and not saying a bad word against him to anyone.

9. The peace of the Holy Angels, which the Christian ought to have, is founded on these two dispositions: love for God and love for one's neighbor. In such a way did all of the Saints of every age acquire peace in their souls. The Savior expressed this point most beautifully when He said: "On these two commandments hang all the law and the Prophets" (St. Matthew 22:40). Do not think that the words which bring grief to you and engender hatred in your soul, even if they appear to be true, proceed from friends who are well-disposed towards you. On the contrary, you should reject these words as venomous and deadly serpents, so that you may thereby both stop your friends from maligning you and deliver your soul from every evil. Search your conscience in detail to see whether it is because of you that your brother has not been reconciled, and do not attempt to deceive it, for it knows your secrets well; for this reason, it will accuse you at the hour of the departure of your soul and will become an impediment for you at the time of prayer.

10. Do not cast off brotherly love lightly, for there remains no other way of salvation for human beings. Observe yourself with care, and see if the evil which separates you from your brother has its cause, not in him, but in you, and make haste to be reconciled with him, lest you transgress the commandment of love. Do not despise the commandment of love, because through it you will become a son of God; whereas, when you transgress it, you will become a son of Gehenna.

11. Do not seek to please yourself, and you will not hate your brother; do not indulge in self-love, and you will love God. If you have chosen to live with spiritual brothers, renounce your will from the moment you pass through the doors of the monastery; for in no other way will you be able to live at peace, either with God or with those with whom you dwell.

12. It is characteristic of the man who embraces vainglory, or is attached to anything material, to be vexed at people over transitory things; or to feel resentment or hatred towards them; or to be enslaved

by shameful thoughts; whereas, all of these things are alien to the God-loving soul.

H. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother who lived in a cœnobitic monastery was bothered by thoughts of leaving. So, one day he took a piece of paper, sat down, and wrote on it all the reasons that his thoughts were telling him to leave his community. After enumerating them, he finally wrote a question to himself: "Can you endure all of these things?" And, as if responding to his question, he wrote below it: "Yes, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, I will endure them." He folded up the paper and tied it up in his belt.

Whenever he was tempted by one of those thoughts that previously assailed him and was bothered by thoughts of leaving his monastic community, he would run off by himself, take out the piece of paper, and read it; and when he would come to the words, "in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, I will endure," he would say to himself, "You did not make your promise to man, but to God," and at once he found relief. Always acting in this way, the monk remained unperturbed when, for any reason, he felt agitation in his soul.

When the other brothers noticed what the monk was doing, and how he passed his life in peace by reading the piece of paper, and finding themselves frequently disturbed, they were aroused by the influence of the Evil One to envy and hatred of the brother. They went to the Abbot and said: "This brother is a sorcerer, and his magic powers are in his belt; for this reason we cannot live with him. Expel either him or us from here." The Abbot, not discounting a plot of the Enemy (for he knew the brother's humility and piety), said to them: "Go away and pray, and I will pray; and after three days, I will give you my answer." That night, as the brother was sleeping, the Abbot approached him quietly and undid his belt; and after reading the paper, he redid the belt and departed.

When three days had passed, the brothers came to the Abbot to hear his answer. He summoned the brother in question and asked him: "Why are you scandalizing the brethren?" He immediately threw himself to the ground and replied: "I have sinned; forgive me and pray for me." The Abbot said to the brothers: "What did you say about this brother?" They answered: "He is a sorcerer and his magic powers are in his belt." "Then cast out his magic," said the Abbot. They rushed to loose his belt, but the brother did not let them. The Abbot said: "Cut it." After cutting

it, they found the piece of paper in it. The Abbot gave it to one of the Deacons, ordering him to stand on a high spot and read it, so that the Evil One who had sowed this slander might be put to shame.

When he read the paper, and the final words, "In the name of Jesus Christ..., I will endure all of these things," the brothers, hearing this, out of shame did not know what to do. They made a prostration before the Abbot, saying: "We have sinned." "Do not make prostrations to me," he replied, "but to God and the brother about whom you spoke falsely, that he may forgive you." They did so. The Abbot said to the brother: "Let us pray to God that He may forgive them." And they prayed for the brothers.

2. An Elder said that the ancient Fathers did not lightly change their place of residence, unless one of these three things happened to them: if they had a neighbor who had a grievance against them arising from envy, that is, who harbored a grudge, and after making every effort to mollify him, they could not bring him round; or if many people would visit them, offering them different kinds of things that they were obliged to accept or praising them excessively; or if they fell into the temptation of fornication because there were women living in the vicinity.

If any of these three things occurs, it is not unreasonable for a monk to withdraw from one place to another. This does not apply to cœnobitic monks, but to those who live in solitude.

3. The Fathers used to say: "If you undergo a temptation in the place where you are living, do not leave the place at a time of temptation; otherwise, wherever you go, you will find in front of you what you are fleeing; but endure until the temptation passes, so that no one will be scandalized by your departure. Do not leave at a time of peace, so that your withdrawal may not cause distress to those who live in that place."

4. An Elder said: "Just as a tree which is continually transplanted cannot bear fruit, so the monk who moves from place to place cannot produce virtue."

5. A cœnobitic monk was once bothered by thoughts of leaving his community; and so he confessed his thoughts to the Abbot. The latter said to him: "Go and stay in your cell and make your body secure within the cell, as a stronghold, and never depart from there; leave your mind to think whatever it wants."

6. An Elder said: "A monk's cell is the furnace of Babylon, in which the Three Youths found the Son of God; and it is the pillar of cloud from which God spoke to Moses."

7. A brother passed nine years being tempted to leave his community, and every day he prepared his cloak for his departure. But when it grew late, he would say to himself, "Tomorrow I will leave this place," but at dawn he would say: "Let us compel ourselves to persevere this day for the Lord's sake." When he had passed nine years in this way, God relieved him of every temptation.

I. From St. Ephraim

O monk, do not say: "Here there is affliction and conflict, but elsewhere there will be respite and freedom from care." Tell me, if you know, who it is that wars against us. Is it not our enemy, the Devil? Listen, then, to what is said in the Book of Job: "And the Lord said to the Devil, 'Whence comest thou?' And the Devil said before the Lord, 'I am come from going through the world, and walking about the whole earth'" (Job 2:2). Know, then, that the world is greater than you and that wheresoever you may go, there is no place under the sky where the common enemy has not set foot. Remain in the place to which you were called and resist the Devil, and thereby he will flee from you; draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Woe to the soul in which there enter unbelief, lack of the fear of God, ignorance, foolishness, and impudence; this soul will become a "portion for foxes" (Psalm 62:10).

On the contrary, blessed is the soul in which fear of God and piety dwell. He who is not content to be the servant of one Lord will be the servant of many; he who cannot endure submitting to one Abbot will be subject to many Abbots in diverse places. Holy Scripture says: "A man who wisheth to separate from friends seeketh an excuse; but at all times he will be liable to reproach" (Proverbs 18:1). Exactly the same happens with the monk who separates from the brotherhood and abandons his monastery: he thinks that the Abbot and the brothers are at fault. In spite of his rationalizations, however, such a monk will never be able to escape the censure that comes from God and reasonable men.

About such a monk, Holy Scripture says: "There is a way which seemeth to be right with men, but the ends of it reach to the depth of Hades" (Proverbs 14:12); and the sacred writer continues: "A bold-hearted man shall be filled with these ways" (Proverbs 14:14). If you ob-

serve money problems in the monastery where you live and you cannot obtain your bodily necessities, do not abandon the place of your repentance; for it is then that you have much work to do there. A holy Abbot is not pleasing to the impious, nor does injustice satisfy a just man.

* The "*tavrea*" or "*tavreia*" was a kind of drum made from the hide of an ox. The hide was sometimes simply called a "*tavrea*."

** The "*modios*" [or "*modius*"—*Trans.*] was a measurement of liquids or dry fruit, about eight or nine kilograms in weight.

*** "*Kosmetor*" or "*kosmetes*" was primarily a military rank. Here it signifies the governor of a district.

Hypothesis XLI

That for those who are not prepared, it is perilous to live alone.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother abandoned the world and took up the monastic *schema;* forthwith he shut himself up in his cell,* saying: "I am an anchorite." When the Elders heard of this, they went and threw him out of his cell; they had him go round to the cells of the monks, make a prostration, and say: "Forgive me, for I am not an anchorite, but a beginner."

2. An Elder was asked how a man could live alone, and he replied: "Unless an athlete spars with many people, he cannot learn the art of victory, so as to be able in this way to engage his opponent in one-to-one combat. Likewise, unless the monk is trained with others and learns the art of dealing with his thoughts, he cannot live by himself or withstand the assaults of his thoughts."

3. Abba Theodore said: "Many in these days choose to rest before God grants this to them."

B. From Abba Isaiah

Abba Isaiah said: "If the mind desires to ascend the Cross before the infirmity of the senses has come to be stopped (through asceticism), the wrath of God comes (upon this man) for beginning a task beyond his capacity, since he has not yet cured his senses. For if our Lord Jesus Christ had not first healed all of the sufferings of mankind, for whose sake He came into the world, He would not have ascended the Cross. For He says, before His Crucifixion: "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and to the poor the gospel is preached; and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me" (St. Matthew 11:4-6). Now John, in baptizing our Lord Jesus Christ, shows that he who comes forward to become a servant of God must first confess his own misdeeds: "[They] were all

baptized of [John], confessing their sins" (St. Mark 1:5). The Lord Jesus did many other miracles, but from those which we have mentioned, we have learned the following.

"The blind receive their sight": he who has his attention turned towards the hope of this world is blind; but if he abandons this temporal hope and turns his attention towards the hope for which we wait, such a man already regains his sight. "The lame walk" shows that he who longs for God, but at the same time cherishes the carnal thoughts of his heart, is lame; however, if he forsakes these thoughts and loves God with his whole heart, he now walks upright. By "the deaf hear" we are taught that he who is distracted is deaf from the captivity of his thoughts and from spiritual forgetfulness, but that if he uses his time for spiritual knowledge, then he regains his hearing. "The lepers are cleansed" means that, as it is written in the Law of Moses, "thou shalt not enter the house of the Lord unclean" [*cf.* Deuteronomy 23:1-3]—a leper is anyone who has enmity, hatred, jealousy, or condemnation towards his neighbor; but if he abandons all of this, then he is cleansed.

To the extent, then, that the blind man regains his sight, the lame man walks, the deaf man hears, and the leper is cleansed, a man who has died on account of these, during a time of negligence, is raised up and renewed. Hereafter, he proclaims to his senses, which were deprived of holy virtues, the good news that he sees again, is walking, hears, and has been cleansed. This is the confession which you, too, gave to him who sponsored you in the monastic life: that is, that you would live in all hardship and humility. About St. John the Forerunner it is written that his clothing was of camel's hair (St. Matthew 3:4) and the like; this signifies the hardship which must first cleanse a man and which subsequently insures that he comes to the Cross.

For the Cross is a sign of future immortality, since it first stops the mouths of the Pharisees and the Sadducees;** the Pharisees, that is, symbolize wickedness, hypocrisy, and vainglory, while the Sadducees symbolize unbelief and a lack of hope in God. As Holy Scripture relates, Jesus stopped the mouths of the Pharisees and the Sadducees: "And after that they durst not ask Jesus any question at all; ...and He sent Peter and John [to] prepare...the Passover" (St. Luke 20:40; 22:8). The allegorical meaning of this passage shows that when the mind sees that it is not dominated by anything, it then prepares itself for immortality, making the senses focus on this thought, making them a single entity, and nurturing them; they now partake inseparably from the mind and remain united with it.

Later, as Scripture says, Jesus prayed: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me (at this hour)" (St. Matthew 26:39). The allegorical meaning of this for us is that if the mind wishes to ascend the Cross, it needs much prayer to God and many tears. It must submit to God at every moment, calling upon His goodness to assist it, that it might be strengthened and preserved until it is raised up to the new, holy, and invincible life.

Because for the mind, there is a great danger at the time of the Cross (the great testing); that is, when one prays, this means that one has need of Peter, James, and John: of sound faith (like Peter), courageous hope (like James), and perfect love (like John), so that he may be able thereby to draw down Grace from on high and ascend the Cross. All of these things happened to our Master Christ, Who was an example for us in every way, as the Apostle says (I St. Peter 2:21), in order that we might know the power of His Resurrection and experience His sufferings—so that we, like Him, might attain to the resurrection from the dead.

The gall which Christ tasted is an indication for us to cast off every wicked desire from our souls, to close our mouths, and not to allow these desires to move beyond our bodies and thus be fulfilled. By the vinegar which He tasted for our salvation, we are taught that we should extinguish all insolence and vain disturbance. By the spitting which they inflicted on Him, we are instructed that we must blot out every tendency to please men and all of the glory of this world. Through the crown of thorns, we are trained to endure the mockery directed against us at every moment and to face various insults with unruffled patience.

The reed with which they smote the head of Jesus for our salvation is also an example for us: that we should always wear the helmet of humility, so that we may crush all of the arrogance which the Enemy inspires in us. The scourging which Jesus underwent before His crucifixion is an indication for us to despise all human disparagement and sarcasm. By the fact that He remained undisturbed as they distributed His garments, we are taught to disregard the vain things of this world, in order that we may ascend the Cross without distraction. The fact that He was crucified at the sixth hour is an example to strengthen us against all torpor and faint-heartedness, until sin dies in our souls, as it is written: "For through the Cross He slew the enmity" (Ephesians 2:16).

The fact that at the ninth hour Jesus cried in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" (St. Matthew 27:46),*** teaches us that we should endure the affliction which the passions cause for us, until they are quenched, so that henceforth we might obtain greater boldness before

God and call upon Him with humility. From the fact that He gave up His spirit after the sun grew dark, we learn that when the mind is freed from all hope of this visible world, it is a sign that sin has now died in a man. It is then that the veil [of the temple] was rent; that is, after the liberation of the mind from earthly and worldly things, the impediment between our minds and God vanishes. Next, the rocks are split and the tombs are opened; this means that if that death (of Jesus) is wrought in us, then every material weight and blindness—and all that weighs the soul down—disappears, and our deadened senses, which are made fruitful through (spiritual) death, are restored to health and raised up invincible. The fact that they wrapped Christ's body in a clean linen cloth and anointed It with sweet spices signifies the sanctification with which the mind is clothed after that life-bearing death; it also signifies the incorruption in which the mind finds rest.

The fact that they laid Him in a new tomb, in which no one had previously been placed, and rolled a large stone before the door of the tomb shows that if the mind is delivered from all of these things and passes through its own Passion Week, it enters into another, new age, thinking new and incorrupt thoughts: "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (St. Matthew 24:28). According to Holy Scripture, "He arose in the glory of His Father and ascended into the Heavens, and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3). And passing on to us an indication of this, the Apostle says: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead" (Colossians 3:1-3). His holy Name has the power to undertake the cure of our sickness, so that, according to the measure of our spiritual poverty, we may leave our sins behind and find mercy together with those who are worthy of Him. Amen.

C. From Abba Mark

There is an energy of Grace that is unknown to the neophyte (in the spiritual life), and there is another energy of evil that resembles the truth. It is good for us not to reflect on these energies, since they may lead us into delusion; nor, again, should we dismiss them, because of our ignorance of the truth. Rather, we should lay everything before God in hope, for He knows what is of value in both of them.

D. From Abba Cassian

Regarding those who live together with other brothers and, because they cannot endure the warfare that comes from the passions, seek the desert and solitude (since, supposedly, there in the desert nothing exists to arouse the passions and stimulate them), and who believe that they will easily overcome the passions in this way: Make known to them that they are being mocked by the demons, or are possessed by incurable pride. For by not wanting to reproach themselves and ascribe the causes of their passions to their own laziness, they find fault with their brothers and want to flee from them; and for this reason their afflictions go unhealed.

For whatever uncured passions they take with them into the desert they will only *conceal* through solitude, without, however, being rid of them. This is because solitude, for those who have not yet been delivered from the passions, not only keeps faults unrevealed, but also knows *how to conceal them*, so that those who have these passions do not perceive that they have them and, as a result, do not recognize by what passions they are overcome.

Conversely, evil thoughts make them imagine that they are upright and that they have achieved long-suffering, humility, and the other virtues. Temptation puts these things into their minds, because there is no one there to stimulate them. But when some pretext arouses them from their stillness and stimulates them, then at once the passions, which were hidden in them and were not previously detected, rush forth violently like unbridled horses, which bolt from their starting-point and throw their rider to his destruction with their violence and ferocity. This destructive onrush of the passions is the result of the fact that the passions are more greatly agitated through lengthy quietness and repose, thus becoming more threatening in their impassioned energy.

For the passions which reside within us become fiercer as long as they are not subjected to repression by our association with other people and thereby grow idle. This small diminution of the vehemence of the passions which is due to contact with the brothers, is, again, lost in solitude, where they are newly intensified against us, much more than before—when, that is, he who it is that arouses hermits is made manifest.

Just as poisonous snakes, which remain in solitude in the desert and their lairs, only manifest their ferocity when they perceive someone approaching, so also do impassioned men act. These men live in solitude,

not from a disposition towards virtue or on account of the demands of the desert; and for this reason, they pour out their venom when they lay hold of someone who approaches them.

E. From St. Barsanouphios

A brother once asked an Elder: "My mind tells me that solitude is more necessary than all of the other virtues, and is beneficial to my soul. Is it right in what it says?"

The Elder answered: "Stillness is nothing other than restraining the heart from all transactions, from attempting to please men, and from other, similar activities; if, then, stillness is what you desire, do not have dealings with worldly people, and you will have quietness—as long as they are separated from you. The Lord tells us: 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice' (St. Matthew 9:13). If you are well aware that compassion is worth more than sacrifice, then let your heart incline towards compassion; for the pretext of solitude leads to arrogance before a man gains himself, that is, before he succeeds in becoming blameless. Only when a man takes up his cross is he able to live in (inner) solitude. If, therefore, you display compassion, you will receive help. But if you wish to ascend beyond your measure, know that you will lose what you have already achieved. Make sure that you avoid extremes and do not stray to the one side or the other, but remain in the middle of the road, understanding the Will of God, "because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

The brother again asked: "Elder, please clarify for me what you mean by what you said: 'Neither to the one side nor to the other, but in the middle.' Do you perhaps mean that we should dedicate certain days to quietness and certain others to material concerns?"

The Elder replied: "For one to have fortitude in quietness but not to disdain his various occupations: this is the middle way, which never fails. But one must have humility, in the arena of quietness, to preserve his sobriety and vigilance in the face of inevitable distractions and to collect his mind, so that not one moment of the hour, to say nothing of the day, is free for the Devil to exploit it; one must indeed act thus, in accordance with whatever befalls him. He should suffer with the brothers of the whole *cœnobion*. When a monk does this, he puts the commandment of the Apostle into practice (Romans 8:17 and I Corinthians 12:26). That is, if anyone from the *cœnobion* is in distress, one should feel distress along with him, in order to alleviate and comfort him; and if one suffers with the ailing (this means those being tested by afflictions) and

helps to cure them, that is good.

"For if a doctor is recompensed for looking after a sick man, how much more will he receive in exchange who suffers with his neighbor, as far as he is able, in all of his trials. If, on the other hand, someone suffers with his neighbor only in certain afflictions and not in all, then even in those cases in which he does suffer with his neighbor, he does so according to his own will and not according to God's Will. Know this also: that a man makes progress to the extent that he is humbled. As for your remaining in your cell now, since you do not have any afflictions, you will not accomplish anything good; and if you remain free from cares prior to undertaking the eremitic and Hesychastic life, then the common Enemy will prepare for you a greater disturbance of your rest, in order to bring you to the point of saying in despair: 'Would that I had not been born!'"

The brother again asked the Elder: "Elder, my thoughts tell me that if I go somewhere and live in solitude, then I shall attain to a measure of perfect silence; for I feel myself to be guilty of many sins and I want to be freed from them. Likewise, because I am living with others, tears and compunction do not come to me, and my thoughts say to me that as long as I remain together with other people I will not be able to acquire these gifts. Have pity on my weakness, my Father, and tell me how I am to be saved from these evil thoughts."

The Elder responded again: "Brother, a man who is in debt, as long as he has not first settled his debt, will—wherever he may go, be it a city or a village— be a debtor and will not have the freedom to remain in a state of rest. Even if he works hard, at the outset he experiences shame from the bantering of men. But then, wherever he may be, he can settle his debt and be set free. Once he is free, he is able with confidence and great boldness either to live with others or to stay where he wants.

"If, therefore, a man succeeds, according to his ability, in tolerating insults and reproaches or indignities and injuries for the sins that he has committed, he learns humility and toil and receives forgiveness for his sins, as Scripture says: 'Look upon my lowliness and my toil, and forgive all my sins' (Psalm 24:18). Consider well how many insults our Master Christ endured before He was crucified and after He ascended the Cross. By analogy, no one can arrive at perfect and fruitful silence and rejoice in the respite of holy perfection, except after undergoing the same sufferings as Christ and enduring them all without murmuring, keeping in view what the Apostle says: 'If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together' (Romans 8:17).

"Be sure, then, that you do not stray, for there is no other way of salvation than this; and about weeping, you should heed this: If you do not struggle when you are with people, to avoid cultivating familiarity with any of them, tears and compunction will not be forthcoming. If you remove yourself from people, in order to acquire these perfections, know that you are avoiding the contest and the arena. Strive among people, therefore, to overcome familiarity with them; for you will not be able to acquire tears and compunction without struggles, as the Apostle says: 'If a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully' (II St. Timothy 2:5). Put forth all your effort, brother, and God will help you; and do not forget, as I told you, to maintain humility, obedience, and submission in all your endeavors; for if you do, you will be saved by the power of the Lord."

F. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder said that it is possible for a man to live for a hundred years in his cell without learning how to live in his cell.

2. An Elder had a disciple who for many years showed exemplary obedience. Although he had not yet achieved perfection, he desired to live alone. One day he approached his Elder and made a prostration, saying: "Father, let me become a monk on my own." "Find a suitable place," replied the Elder, "and we will make a cell for you." He went about a mile away and found a place; he announced this to the Elder, and they built a cell. The Elder said to his disciple: "Here is what you were looking for. Stay in your cell, therefore, and when the need arises, eat, drink, and sleep. Only do not go out of your cell until Saturday, and then come to me." After giving him these instructions, the Elder went away.

The brother spent two days as he was told; but on the third day, he fell into boredom and said to himself: "Why has my Elder done this to me?" He got up and chanted a great many Psalms and, after sunset, ate. After praying, he went to sleep on his mat. But he saw an Ethiopian lying on it, gnashing his teeth against him. He left the cell at a run and went to his Elder. Knocking on his door, he said: "Abba, have mercy on me and open up!" The Elder did not open the door to him until dawn. At dawn, he opened it and found the disciple begging him and saying tearfully: "Have mercy on me, I beseech you, and allow me to stay close to you, for I saw a fierce Ethiopian gnashing his teeth against me and

lying on my mat when I went to sleep. I can no longer live there." The Elder took pity on him and brought him inside; thereafter he trained him in the monastic life according to his capacity, and he gradually became an experienced monk.

3. A brother who lived alone in his cell was disturbed by thoughts when alone. He went to Abba Theodore of Pherme and related what he had experienced. The Elder listened to him and said: "Go and humble your mind; submit yourself and live with other brothers."

The monk did as the Elder told him. But after a short while, he returned to the Elder and said to him: "I cannot find rest among men, either."

Abba Theodore replied to him: "If you can neither find rest on your own nor endure other men, why did you become a monk? Did you not become one in order to put up with afflictions? Tell me, for how many years have you been wearing the monastic *schema*?" "Eight," replied the monk. "My dear brother," answered Abba Theodore, "I have been wearing the monastic *schema* for seventy entire years, and I have never been able to find rest, not even for a single day; yet, you want to acquire perfect rest in only eight years?"

Fortified by the Elder's words, the monk departed.

4. It was said about Abba Theodore and Abba Loukios, who lived at the Enaton Monastery in Alexandria,**** that, being vexed for fifty years by thoughts of leaving, they mocked these thoughts and said to them: "When this winter has passed, we will depart from here." When summer came around again, they would say: "When this summer has passed, we will leave." Deceiving the thoughts with these procrastinations, they remained in the place of their asceticism until their repose.

G. From Abba Isaac

Brother, no one can conquer the passions except through palpable virtues, that is, bodily and visible ones. Likewise, no one can overcome the pride of the intellect in any other way than by the subtlety of spiritual knowledge or by some Godly occupation; for our intellect is volatile, and if it is not tied down by some reflection, it does not cease from wandering. If a man does not first conquer his enemies, how will he be at peace? And if peace does not reign in his intellect, how will he be able to find and to understand how many good things are stored up in

peace? For the passions are a barrier impeding the hidden virtues of the soul, and if these passions are not first cast down by means of externally manifest virtues, that which lies within cannot be seen. For a man who is outside the walls (of a city) cannot associate with those within the walls. Likewise, no one sees the sun in the gloom or the virtues of the soul when they are veiled by the mist of the passions.

Beseech God that He might grant you the ability to feel spiritual yearning and aspirations. When this feeling comes to you, you will truly stand aloof from the world and the world will stand aloof from you; that is, every material attachment will cease to be active in your soul. But it was the wise Lord's good pleasure that those who seek this bread should find it by the sweat of their brow, and this is to our benefit, lest, by partaking of it prematurely, we should suffer indigestion and die. Every virtue, therefore, is engendered by another; and if you neglect first to acquire the mothers and hasten to seize their daughters, these virtues will be vipers to your soul, unless you speedily cast them away from you.

H. From Abba Barsanouphios

A brother who lived a life of silence by himself in his cell read in the books of the Elders that he who truly wants to be saved must first, in associating with people, endure insults, disparagements, and indignities, and, in a word, must first rectify his senses and free himself from warfare with them. Only thus will he attain to perfect stillness, as did our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was first dishonored and unimaginably humiliated, and then ascended the Cross, which is the deadening of the flesh and the passions, and perfect, holy rest.

After studying all of this, the Hesychast brother said to himself: "I, the poor wretch, have not done a single one of these things, yet I withdrew from human society, having scandalized everyone by my weakness. Could it be, then, that I ought to return to human company and, with God's help, carry out all that the Fathers said, and only then enter into solitude, lest my labor be wasted?" He immediately confessed these thoughts of his to the Elder.

After listening to him attentively, the Elder replied: "The Fathers were right in all that they said, and there is no other way for anyone to be saved; but since there are many pretexts by which a man can imagine himself to be doing good, and still others which make him ultimately think that he is harming himself, he must safeguard himself well.

Because you succeeded in living for so many years in solitude, if you return to human society, your mind will give rise to vainglory. Indeed, it is not fitting for you to be in the world, for if you abide there, two evils will be created.

"But if you accuse yourself for not having previously done what was essential for ascending the Cross, saying, 'I lived the monastic life without knowing what I was supposed to do,' self-reproach knows how to insult and disparage the self; and in this way, it subsequently brings one who accepts it to the measure of the true cross of asceticism."

* Regarding recluses, see endnotes for Hypothesis XXXIII, above—*Trans.*

** The Pharisees (from the Hebrew word "*parush*," which is equivalent to "*eusebes*" ["pious"—*Trans.*] were the followers of a religious heresy of Judaism, who were devoted to the forms of external worship. They proclaimed that they believed in Divine Providence, the existence of Angels, the immortality of the soul, the eternity of Hell, and the resurrection of the dead. Deep down, however, they were grasping, lovers of glory, hypocritical, and prideful. The Lord draws a marvellous picture of their pridefulness in the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee (St. Luke 18:10-14) and castigates their hypocrisy (St. Matthew 23:13-39).

The Sadducees were the followers of another Jewish heresy (taking their name from Sadok, the founder of this heresy), who based themselves on the letter of the Law alone, rejecting tradition, the existence of Angels, the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection from the dead. They were adversaries of the Pharisees. The Lord silenced them with His responses (St. Matthew 22:23-34).

*** As the Evangelist Mark relates, when the Lord was suspended on the Cross, shortly before He gave up His spirit, at about the ninth hour, He emitted a loud cry, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which St. Mark himself interprets to mean, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (St. Mark 15:34). St. Matthew cites the same phrase as "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" giving it the same interpretation (St. Matthew 27:46).

**** Enaton was the name of a monastery in Egypt, which received this appellation from the *semeion* where it was located, that is, the ninth *semeion* from Alexandria. Concerning this monastery, see Hypothesis XXVI, Section C, above.

Hypothesis XLII

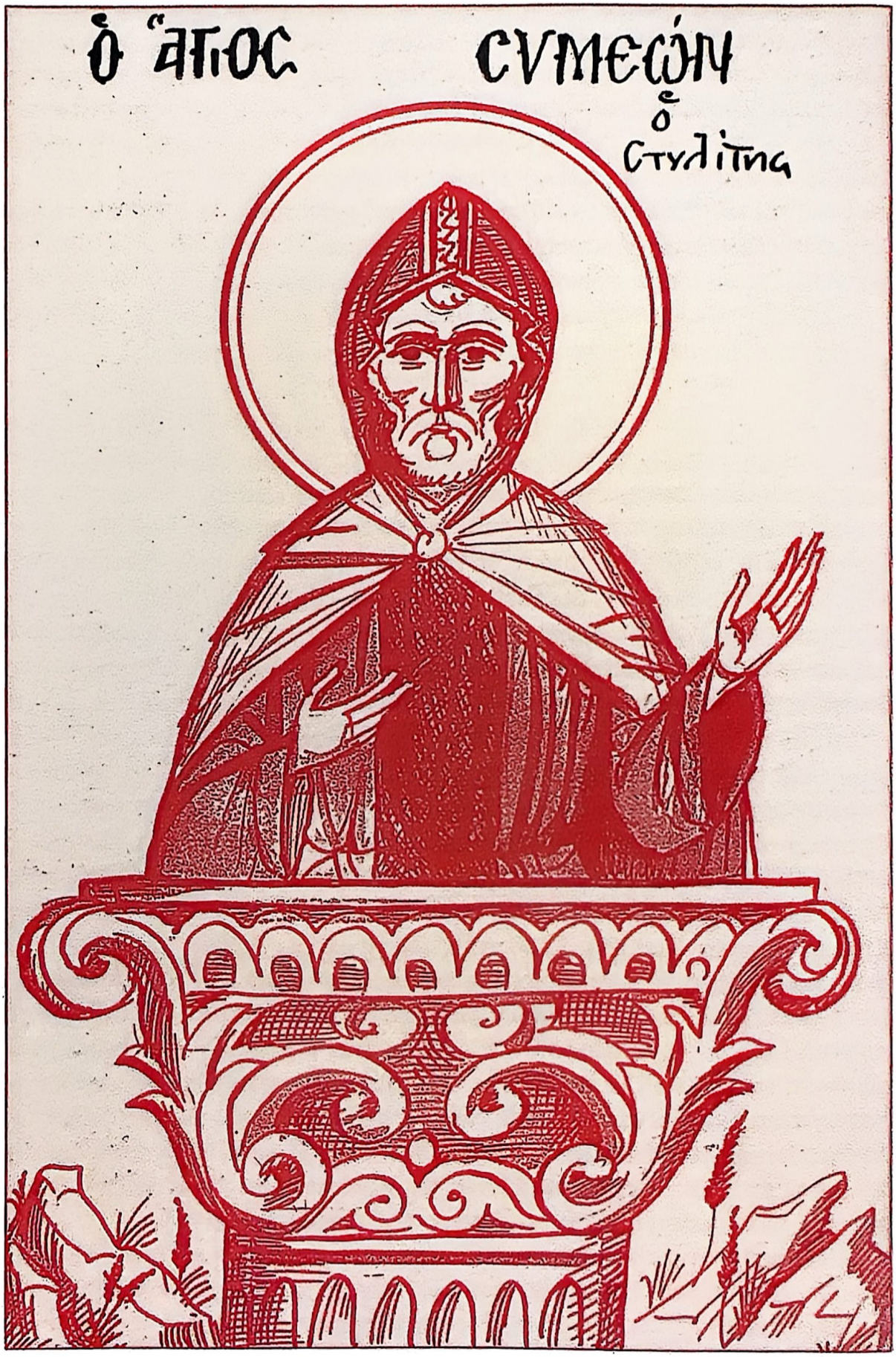
That we should not gainsay anyone in a contentious manner even regarding those things that are considered good, but should be subject to our neighbor in everything.

A. From the life of St. Symeon of the *Mandra* [the Stylite]

When St. Symeon was contemplating living on a pillar—an unprecedented form of asceticism—and reports about him had spread throughout the desert, the ascetics were astounded by this novel and strange undertaking, and they sent some representatives to him. They ordered them, on the one hand, to reprimand St. Symeon for this curious invention of his and, on the other hand, to instruct him to traverse the accustomed path of asceticism traced by the holy Fathers and not to look down upon it, since thereby multitudes of blessed ascetics had ascended to the heavens and found rest in the eternal tabernacles.

But then, fearing lest this idea of St. Symeon might be pleasing to God, while they viewed the matter in a human way, they also gave these instructions to their representatives: If they saw the man immediately departing of his own will and descending from his pillar in obedience to them, they should at once restrain him and order him to remain steadfast in his purpose. For in this way they would be convinced that Symeon's ascetic feat was Divinely ordained, and they would not be afraid for the future—that such a beginning in asceticism would not have a good end. But if he took umbrage and would not tolerate listening even for a short while to their advice, but doggedly and heedlessly followed his own will, it would become quite obvious that he was far removed from humility; in which case, who would not say that the Evil One had suggested this idea to him? Therefore, if such were the case, the Fathers of the desert instructed their representatives to bring him down from the pillar, even if by force and even if against his will.

After receiving this command, the envoys of the ascetics reached Symeon, the Father of humility and obedience; but as soon as they saw him and greeted him, they were overcome by reverence for him and were unable to look at his face. However, on account of the order of the Fathers who had sent them and for the sake of the service to which they



St. Symeon the Stylite

had been assigned, they related to him in detail what the Fathers had told them. St. Symeon, truly meek and humble of heart, listened to the reprimand without offering any objection; he neither grew angry nor argued nor said anything at all—neither a little nor a lot. He immediately accepted the reproof and, with eyes lowered and with a kindly countenance, gave thanks to God and expressed his gratitude to the Fathers for their concern for him; and without any hesitation, he undertook to descend from his pillar. The envoys at once restrained him and made known to him the mind of the Fathers. They then besought him to remain steadfastly and unceasingly on the pillar, and, wishing him a good end, that he might find sure rest from God for his constant labors, they departed.

B. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Poimen said that a man's will is a wall of brass between him and God and a rock that blocks us. If a man forsakes his will, he himself will say: "By my God shall I leap over a wall" (Psalm 17:30). But if a man's egotism coöperates with his will, that man comes to grief.

2. An Elder said that quarrelling delivers a man to anger, anger delivers him to blindness, and blindness impels him to perpetrate every evil.

3. When Abba Ammonas was asked what the strait and narrow way was, he said in reply: "The strait and narrow way is to do violence to one's thoughts and to cut off one's own will for God's sake; this is the meaning of the words: 'Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee' (St. Matthew 19:27)."

4. Abba John related that Abba Anoub and Abba Poimen and five others, who were brothers in the flesh, had at first lived together in Sketis. Then, after Sketis was devastated by the Mazikes* for the first time, they departed from there and went to a place called Teremuthin,** where there was a pagan temple. They entered this temple, where they stayed for a short time, until they could decide where to go. Abba Anoub, who was the senior among them, said to Abba Poimen: "Do me a favor, you and your brothers, and let each of us live by himself and let us not have any contact with one another this whole week." "Let us do as you wish," replied Abba Poimen. And this is what they did.

In that place, there was a stone statue, and every morning Abba Anoub would throw stones at its face; every evening he would say to it: "Forgive me." He did this for the entire week. On Saturday they met together, and Abba Poimen said to Abba Anoub: "This whole week, Abba, I saw you throwing stones at the face of the statue and making a prostration to it afterwards. Tell me, then: Is this the way a believer acts?"

The Elder answered: "I did this for your sake; for when you saw me throwing stones at the face of the statue, did it talk to me or get angry?" "No," replied Abba Poimen. The Elder went on: "Again, when I made a prostration to it, was it moved or did it say, 'I will not forgive you'?" "No," Abba Poimen responded. Abba Anoub concluded: "Well then, if you want us to remain with each other, let us become like this statue, which is not moved, whether it is insulted or glorified. But if you do not wish this to be so, look, there are four doorways in this temple; let each of you go wheresoever he wants." And when the brothers heard this, they threw themselves to the ground, saying to him: "We will do as you wish, Father, and will listen to what you tell us."

Abba Poimen remarks: "We remained with each other for the whole of our time, working according to the instructions which the Elder gave us. He made one of us steward, and we ate whatever he set before us. It was unthinkable for any of us to say, 'Bring us something else' or 'We want to eat this,' and we passed our whole time in quietness and peace."

5. Abba Alonios said: "If I had not destroyed my whole self, I would not have been able to rebuild myself; that is, if I had not forsaken everything deriving from my own will that appeared good to me, I would not have been able to acquire the virtues."

6. A brother asked Abba Poimen: "How am I to conduct myself in the place where I live?" The Elder replied: "Wherever you live, you should have the attitude of a stranger, so that you may not seek to have the first word, and you will find rest of soul."

7. Abba Poimen said: "Do not fulfill your own will; it is necessary rather to humble yourself before your brother."

8. A brother asked an Elder: "What can I do to be saved?" The Elder replied to him: "Go and join him who says, 'What need have I?' and you will have rest; that is, imitate one who does not want his own will, but says, 'I do not desire anything,' and you will be at rest."

9. An Elder told the following parable, so that his disciples might understand what humility is: "Once upon a time, the cedars said to the reeds: 'How is it that although you are weak and feeble, you do not break in winter, whereas we, although we are so large, are crushed and, at times, uprooted?' The reeds answered: 'When winter comes and the winds blow, we bend with the winds this way and that; and this is why we do not break. But because you stand up against the winds, you court danger.'" The Elder then concluded: "We should defer, when people insult us, and give way. We should not contradict them; nor should we fall into inappropriate thoughts, quarrel with them, or cause trouble."

10. Two Elders lived together for many years without ever quarrelling. One of them said: "Let us argue for once, as people do." The other Elder replied: "But I don't know how to start an argument." The former then said: "Look, I will set a small brick between us and say that it is mine. You will immediately respond: 'No, it's mine.' This is how the argument will begin."

The first Elder placed a small brick between them and said to the other: "This is mine." "No," replied the other, "it's mine." Then the former said: "If it is yours, take it and go." They departed, being unable to quarrel with each other.

C. From St. Ephraim

If you want to live with other brothers, you should not desire to give them orders, but rather to become an example for them of good deeds, being obedient to them in everything they say to you. If the need arises for you to speak, tell them your opinion, as one giving advice with humility. If a brother objects to what you say, do not let your mind be disturbed, but lay aside your will for the sake of peace and love; and speak meekly to the one who made the objection, as follows: "You must think me a fool to have spoken thusly, O blessed one; forgive me, for I spoke out of ignorance. But let it be as you said." Through your giving way, the Devil, who creates such turmoil, will turn back in shame, without having accomplished anything.

If you argue and insist on your will being done, you provoke disturbances and an anger that is hard to treat. As Scripture says, "Anger will rest in the bosom of the ungodly" (Ecclesiastes 7:9). In another place it says: "The sway of his anger shall be his downfall" (Ecclesiasticus 1:22). This is why the Apostle Paul instructs us: "And the servant of the

Lord must not strive" (II St. Timothy 2:24).

D. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)

A quarrelsome man is not only never at peace with his kinsfolk, but not even with strangers; for in his desire to satisfy his quarrelsome way of thinking, he is forever plotting schemes and is constantly angry; moreover, he also clouds the minds of others, and they all end up hating him. Regarding this type of person, it is written in Genesis: "Esau took women of other tribes to wife; ...and they were provoking to Isaac and Rebecca.... And Rebecca said to Isaac: 'I am weary of my life because of the daughters of the sons of Heth'" (Genesis 26:34-35; 27:46).*** These passages show that contentiousness and quarrels are fitting to the ungodly and not to the faithful and the pious.

True Christians and disciples of Christ emulate their Teacher and Master, concerning Whom it is written: "He will not quarrel or cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the squares" [*cf.* Isaiah 42:2]. These blessed people do not attempt to resolve any issue whatever with disputes and quarrels, but rather with patience and prayer and with obedience and hope, inspired by the thought that they ought never to impose their opinions, desiring and insisting that their will be done; moreover, as the Lord said: "I came...not to do Mine own will, ...but the will of the Father that sent Me" (St. John 6:38-39).

E. From Abba Isaiah

If you are living with a brother and you want something to be done, but the brother with whom you live does not want it to be done, then you should submit your own will to him, in order to avoid quarrelling and distress. Towards your brother you should be as a temporary sojourner; do not give him orders in anything and do not wish to appear higher than he. If he enjoins you to do something you do not want to do, fight against your will, until you do what you have been bidden to do, so that you may not grieve him and lose your harmonious and peaceful co-existence with him. If he says to you, "Cook me something," ask him gently: "What do you want me to make?" And if he leaves it up to you, replying, "Make whatever you want," then, with fear of God, prepare what is available.

If, during your conversations, you mention some passage of Scripture, let the one who knows the passage submit his will to his brother,

for in this way he will give rest and joy to his brother. For the deeper meaning of any passage is that you should humble yourself in all things before your brother.

He who constantly keeps in mind the judgment which he will face at the impartial tribunal of the Judge, Who will appear at the Second Coming, will do whatever he can from henceforth to make sure that his mouth is not sealed at that fearful hour, thus having no defense to put forth.

If you wish to go out to do some small task, do not let one brother ignore the other and go out alone, leaving his brother in his cell to be beset by remorse. Let him say to his brother with love: "Do you want us to go out together?" If he sees that his brother is resting at that hour, or is physically ill, let him not quarrel by saying, "We must go out now," but let him postpone the task and return to his cell out of compassionate love for his brother. Be sure that you do not oppose your brother in any matter, lest you cause him distress.

If you live with others and are doing any kind of handiwork, whether inside or outside your cell, and your brother calls you, do not say to him, "Wait a little while, so that I can finish this handiwork," but obey him at once. If you are living with someone, or are being offered hospitality, and you receive some command, for the sake of God be careful not to resent this command and not to transgress it either secretly or openly.

If you live with your spiritual Father or with a brother, be sure that you do not secretly maintain a friendship with someone which you do not want your brothers who live with you to know about; for in this way, you lead both yourself and him into perdition. In the way that an animal is subject to a man, every man should be subject to his brother, for the sake of God. Just as the animal does not have a will, or its own mind, so also should I act not only before the one with whom I live, but also before him who opposes me; and I should submit my judgment to him who is ignorant and my will to him who is foolish. Then I will know myself with precision and will understand what it is that harms me. He who has confidence in his own virtue and rectitude, and insists on his will, cannot avoid enmity; nor can he have respite of soul or see his deficiencies. Such a person, when he departs from his body (that is, when he dies), will have difficulty finding compassion from God.

Do not be quarrelsome, brother, lest every evil dwell inside you; and do not consider yourself wise, lest you fall into the hands of your enemies. Accustom your tongue to saying, "Forgive me," and humility will

then come upon you. If you submit your will to your neighbor, that is because your mind sees his virtues; contrariwise, if you insist on your own will and stand in opposition to your neighbor, you display your ignorance.

Be sure, my beloved, to submit your will to your neighbor in all cases, because insistence on your own will destroys all the virtues; he who thinks correctly gently cuts off his own will, because he fears contentiousness like a serpent. For contentiousness destroys all spiritual upbuilding and darkens the soul, so that it does not see the light of the virtues. This accursed passion mingles with the virtues until it destroys them.

This is why our Lord Jesus Christ, in showing to us that unless a man cuts off this dishonorable passion he cannot make progress according to God, only ascended the Cross after He had previously expelled Judas from the circle of the Disciples (St. John 13:25-31). The passion of contentiousness results in all manner of evils and everything that God hates resides in the soul of a quarrelsome man. By virtue of cutting off your will, the virtues are at peace with one another and the governing principle of the soul becomes tranquil. This is precisely what God seeks more than all the other virtues: that a man should humble himself before his neighbor and submit to him in everything. The following vices engender contentiousness: loquacity, altering words to what is pleasing to each person, outspokenness, duplicity, and wanting your own opinion to prevail. All of these give birth to contentiousness, and the soul of him who has these faults is a dwelling-place of all the passions.

F. From Abba Mark

Do not attempt to settle a difficult matter or a question in Scripture through contentiousness, but with those means prescribed by spiritual law: patience, prayer, and unwavering hope.

G. From the *Gerontikon*

1. It was said about Abba Poimen that when he was invited to eat, though not wishing to do so, he would tearfully go, so as not to disobey his brother and cause him grief. By "brother," I mean one who lived with him, that is, Abba Anoub, or one of the others with whom he dwelt.

2. A brother asked Abba Poimen: "How should those in a *cœnobion* live?" The Elder replied that he who lives in a *cœnobion* should look on all of the monks as a single brother and keep watch over his mouth and eyes, and he will thus find rest.

* The Mazikes were a barbarian people who lived to the west of the River Triton in Libya. Modern commentators think that they are the same people to whom the ancient Greek historian Herodotus refers under the name "Mazyes." These people left the right half of their heads unshorn and shaved the left, and painted their bodies. They claimed to be the descendants of the Trojans, who were dispersed after the capture of Troy by the Greeks.

** "Τερεμοῦθιν" [i.e., "Τερεμοῦθις" or "Teremouthis," as the Greeks sometimes called "Terenuthis"—*Trans.*]: a city in Africa. [Probably the ruins of Kom Abu Billu, near Tarraneh, in Egypt. See Derwas J. Chitty, *The Desert a City* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press: 1995), p. 12—*Trans.*]

*** The descendants of Heth, the son of Canaan, were called "Hethæans." They were idolaters, from among whom Esau took a wife. They inhabited Hebron in Northern Palestine and came into frequent contact with the Hebrews.

Hypothesis XLIII

That whatever happens, happens by the justice of God; for this reason the believer must always follow Divine Providence and must seek, not his own will, but the Will of God; for he who does or accepts all things in this manner has spiritual rest.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder said: "If you are sick and you seek to receive something from somebody for your needs, but he does not give it to you, do not be distressed at him, but say to yourself: 'If I had been worthy to receive it, God would have informed the brother that he should offer me charity.'"

2. The same Elder also said: "If you are invited to an *agape* meal* and they seat you in the lowest place, let your mind not murmur against your hosts, but say inside yourself: 'I am not worthy to sit even here.' For you should know that no affliction comes upon a man unless God permits it from on high, either to test his faith or on account of his sins. He who does not think in this way does not believe that God is a just Judge."

3. An Elder related that the Fathers had once gathered for their spiritual edification. One of them suddenly got up and grabbed the small cushion which was on his seat; having placed it on his shoulders, and holding it up with both of his hands, he stood in the midst of them all and, looking towards the East, prayed, saying: "O my God, have mercy on me." Thereupon, he replied to himself: "If you want Me to be merciful to you, let go of what you are carrying, and I will show you mercy."

And once again he said: "O my God, have mercy on me." Again, he replied to himself: "I told you, let go of what you are carrying, and I will have mercy on you." After repeating this scene many times, he finally sat down. The Fathers then asked him: "Explain to us what this action of yours means."

The Elder replied to them: "The cushion which I carried on my shoulders symbolizes my will; I besought God to have mercy on me

while I was carrying my will; and God said to me, 'Let go of what you are carrying, that is, your will, and I will have mercy on you.' And we"—the Elder concluded—"if we want God to have mercy on us, let us forsake our own desires; then we will obtain God's mercy."

B. From Abba Isaiah

Brother, if you encounter some difficulty, whether in your work, or in conversation, or in thought, do not seek your own will at all, but endeavor to discover with care what God's Will is and put it into practice completely, even if its performance occasions some toil. You should believe with all your heart that the Will of God is advantageous to you in a manner surpassing all human understanding. For the commandment of God is eternal life, and he who seeks it will not be deprived of any good thing.

C. From Abba Mark

Some people call wise those who are capable of making distinctions between perceptible things; wise, however, are those who have control over their volitions. He who does not make his will subject to God becomes entangled in his own pursuits and becomes a pawn of his adversaries. When you want to settle some involved issue, you should seek, in this regard, what is pleasing to God, and thereby you will find a beneficial solution. In those matters with which God is content, the whole of creation acquiesces; but in those for which He has an aversion, creation, likewise, is opposed to them. He who objects to distressing circumstances is, without knowing it, in conflict with the command of God; but he who accepts them, because he is truly aware of their causes, waits patiently on the Lord, as Scripture says [*cf.* Psalm 39:1]. When a time of testing comes, do not inquire why or from what cause it has come, but be sure to endure it thankfully and without resentment.

D. From St. Diadochos

We men are all created in the image of God; but to be in His likeness belongs only to those who have brought their freedom in subjection to God through great love. That is, when we do not belong to ourselves, it is then that we resemble Him Who reconciled Himself to us through love.

E. From the *Gerontikon*

Abba Isidore said: "The wisdom of the Saints is that they recognized the Will of God; for a man overcomes all things through obedience to the truth, since he is an image and likeness of God. The most fearful of all the passions is for one to follow his own heart, that is, to obey his own will and not the law of God. This passion appears, at the outset, to afford a man some respite, but later it turns into internal mourning, because he has lost sight of the mystery of the Divine œconomy and has not found the way of God, that he might walk therein."

* An "*agape* meal" entails hospitality and the entertainment of a guest at a common table. "*Agape*" was also a name for the public gatherings of the early Christians, during which they would set out a simple common meal for everyone.

Hypothesis XLIV

That humility is completely impregnable to demons, how humility is engendered, and what its power is; that humility, more than all the other virtues, is able, by itself, to save a man.

A. From the Life of St. Pachomios

A man by the name of Silvanos, who was formerly an actor, went to the monastery of St. Pachomios, wishing to renounce the world and to become a monk. After they had announced him to the Saint, the latter summoned him and said: "Take note, brother, given, indeed, that your previous life in the theater impels your soul towards that which is worst, that monastic life demands toil and requires a vigilant soul and chaste thoughts, so that you might be able, with God's Grace, to resist him who afflicts us."

After Silvanos had agreed to fulfill all that St. Pachomios taught him, the great man received him into the brotherhood. But having struggled for a long time, Silvanos began again to neglect his salvation, to be enticed into wantonness, and to take pleasure in foolish jesting; he even reached the point of singing the obscene songs of the theater podium (*thymele*),* without any shame, in front of the brothers of the monastery.

The Saint immediately summoned Silvanos and, after twenty years of ascetic life, ordered him to cast off his monastic *schema* before the brothers, to put on his worldly garments, and to be expelled from the monastery. Silvanos then fell at the feet of the holy Elder and besought him: "Forgive me this one more time, Father, and I believe that the Master, Who saves the ailing, will help me to remain here, repenting for all the negligence in which I have lived up to now, so that you may be the first to rejoice at the transformation of my soul and to give thanks to God for it."

St. Pachomios replied to this plea: "You know well how many things I put up with in you, even to the point, many times, of striking you—something which I have never done to any other man. Indeed, I have never even reached out my hand to another person; but in your case, I was compelled to use physical force, which caused more pain to me

than it did to you, since we are linked through spiritual compassion. Besides, I used this severe measure for no other reason than for your salvation, so that at least in this way I might be able to correct your faults.

"Since you received so many admonitions and yet were unwilling to change for the better, and since, even after the drubbing I gave you, you failed to choose what is in your interest, how can I now allow you, an ailing member, to associate any longer with the flock of Christ? Will not the mange of the one spread to all and, in a short time, harm a significant part of the brotherhood?"

These, then, were the objections that the Father presented to Silvanos. But the latter persevered in his appeal and assured St. Pachomios that, from that time on, he would correct himself. The Saint asked for guarantees that he would not persist in the same behavior. Then Petronios, a holy and wondrous man, consented to guarantee that Silvanos would keep his promises, and the Saint forgave him. After blessing him, he handed him over to Petronios.

As soon as Silvanos had received forgiveness, he humbled himself to such a degree that he became a model and an example for many, or, rather, for the *entire* brotherhood, on account of all the virtues to which he attained and, above all, on account of his Godly tears. So distinguished was he for his tear-stained compunction that, even when he was eating, his tears often poured out like a river, and he could not hold them back; and they would be mingled with his food, so that the words of the Prophet-King David were fulfilled in him: "For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping" (Psalm 101:10).

When his brothers said that he was perhaps just doing this to impress strangers or other people, he protested that he often wanted to restrain his tears for just this reason, but was unable to do so. For their part, they insisted that while he could weep from compunction when he was on his own and at prayer, he should restrain himself at the time that he was eating in refectory (for the soul, they said, could always be in a state of compunction even without external tears). They persisted in their attempt to find out why he was weeping so much and, indeed, dissuaded him ("because"—they said—"we blush with embarrassment when we see you, and many of us cannot even eat").

He then replied to them: "So, my brothers, you do not want me to weep when I see myself being served by saintly men—even the dust of whose feet has value for me—though I am worthy of nothing? Should I not mourn, then? Tell me, am I, an actor, worthy of being served by

such holy men? I mourn, my brothers, because I fear daily lest the earth should swallow me up as it swallowed Dathan and Abiron, who attempted to offer incense in the Holy of Holies with evil intentions and unclean hands;** and I am afraid because, knowing as much as I do, I nonetheless neglect the salvation of my soul. This is why I am not ashamed to weep, for I know my many sins. So, even if I were to hand over my soul, I would not be doing anything strange." Since Silvanos struggled so well and for quite some time, St. Pachomios the Great made the following announcement, one day, before everyone:

"Brethren, I declare before God that, from the time that this *cœnobion* was established, I know of no one among the brothers who live with me who has emulated me, with but one exception."

When the brothers heard these words, some thought that he meant Theodore, others that he meant Petronios, and yet others that he meant Orsisios. When Theodore plucked up the courage to ask St. Pachomios whom he had in mind, the great man was reluctant to speak. Since Theodore persisted more forcefully, and the senior brothers, as well, insistently sought to find out who this exception was, St. Pachomios responded as follows:

"If I thought that the man about whom I am speaking were capable of being puffed up when he is praised, I would not identify him. But since I know that the more he is praised, the more he is humbled by the Grace of Christ, for this reason I will praise him without fear before you, so that you might emulate his conduct.

"You, Theodore, and all who struggle as you do here in this monastery, have bound the Devil and thrown him like a sparrow beneath your feet; and daily, with the Grace of Christ, you trample him into the earth. But if you should become careless about yourselves, I fear, lest the captive Devil may rise up from under your feet and launch an assault against you.

"Brother Silvanos, however, whom we were going to expel from our monastery a short while ago on account of his negligence, has now totally subdued the Devil and destroyed him, so that the Evil One can no longer appear in his presence; and in the end, by his extreme humility, he has completely overcome the Devil. Now you, because you have performed virtuous deeds, rest your confidence on what you have accomplished up to now. But the more he struggles, the more he presents himself to all as a beginner, constantly thinking with all of his soul and all of his mind that he is worthless. This is precisely why he weeps—and easily at that—for it is easy for him to abase himself, and he does not

reckon any of his accomplishments to be important. Nothing so weakens the Devil as real humility that is practiced with one's whole soul."

Silvanos struggled in this way for another eight years, apart from the preceding twenty, and completed the course of his asceticism. His sanctity was proclaimed by the Saint (Pachomios), who said also about his death that he saw a multitude of holy Angels receiving his soul with great joy and ascending to Heaven, in order to offer it to Christ as a choice sacrifice.

B. From the Life of St. Synkletike

The Blessed Synkletike said that humility is so great a virtue that the Devil, who can mimic almost all the virtues, does not have even the slightest idea what humility is. For this reason, the Apostle Peter, knowing the security and steadfastness of humility, enjoins us to be clothed with humility (I St. Peter 5:5), so that it might be inseparable from us and so that all of the other virtues may be thereby held and bound together. Just as it is impossible for a boat to be constructed without nails, so it is impossible for a man to be saved without humility. Have you considered the hymn of the three Children? How, although they did not make much mention of the other virtues, they numbered the humble among those who chant, without making reference to the chaste or the poor (Song of the Three Youths 15, 64)? Our Lord Jesus Christ, too, in bringing to fruition His Divine *Oikonomia* [Providence—*Trans.*] towards us, clothed Himself in this virtue: "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (St. Matthew 11:29). Let humility be for you, then, the beginning and end of all good things.

C. From the *Gerontikon*

1. One of the Fathers related that there was an industrious Elder in the (Cells), who wore a garment made of woven rushes. On one occasion, he visited Abba Ammonas. When Abba Ammonas saw him wearing the straw garment, he said: "This does you no good at all." The Elder then asked Abba Ammonas: "Father, there are three thoughts that bother me: specifically, whether I should go into the desert regions; or depart to a foreign place, where nobody knows me; or shut myself up in my cell and have no dealings with anyone, eating every second day. Which of these should I choose?" Abba Ammonas answered: "It will not benefit you to carry out any of these three thoughts. It is better—if

you wish to hear me—to stay in your cell and eat a small amount each day, always keeping the words of the Publican in your heart (St. Luke 18:13); then you can be saved."

2. A brother went to the mountain of Pherme to visit a great Elder, and said to him: "Abba, what am I to do, for my soul is perishing?" "Why so, my child?" asked the Elder. "When I was in the world," replied the brother, "I fasted gladly, kept vigil a great deal, and felt much compunction and fervent zeal; but now I do not see anything good in my soul." The Elder responded to him: "Believe me, child, that whatever you did when you were in the world was not acceptable to God, because in doing those things you were urged on by vainglory and the praise of men. This is why Satan did not make war on you. He had no interest in breaking your eagerness, because you derived no benefit from it whatever.

"But now, when he sees that you have been called by Christ and are His soldier, and have come forth to oppose him, he has armed himself against you. Thus, the one Psalm that you say with compunction here is more pleasing to God than the thousands that you used to say in the world. Here, God more gladly accepts your small amount of fasting than the weeks of fasting that you undertook in the world."

"Now I do not fast at all," answered the brother; "rather, I have lost all the good things that I had in the world." "What you have now is sufficient for you," said the Elder; "only be patient and it will be well with you."

But the brother persisted and said: "Abba, my soul is perishing." The Elder then replied to him: "Believe me, brother, I did not want to say this to you, so as not to destroy your solicitude; but since I see that Satan has brought you to a state of indifference, I tell you: It is prideful for you to suppose that when you were in the world you did good and lived well; for this is how the Pharisee thought (when he was boasting in the Temple), and he lost all the good that he had accomplished. Now if, on the other hand, you think that you are not doing anything good, this is sufficient for you to be saved; for this is humility. It was in this way (through humility and self-deprecation) that the Publican, who had done nothing good, was justified (St. Luke 18:14). A sinful and negligent man who feels contrition of heart and humility is more pleasing before God than one who does many good deeds, but is of the opinion that he has completely succeeded in accomplishing something good." Receiving great benefit from this reply of the Abba, the brother made a

prostration to the Elder and said to him: "Today, Abba, my soul has been saved because of you."

3. Abba Epiphanios used to say that the Canaanite woman cried and was heard (St. Matthew 15:22); the woman with an issue of blood approached in silence and was praised (St. Mark 5:24-34); the Publican did not open his mouth at all and his prayer was heard by God; the Pharisee shouted and was condemned.

4. Abba Longinos was once asked: "Which is the greatest of all the virtues?" He replied: "I reckon that just as pride is the greatest of the passions, since it was able to cast various beings down from Heaven,*** so also is humility the greatest of all the virtues. For it has the power to raise a man up from those dark abysses, even if he is a sinner like the Devil. This is why the Lord called the poor in spirit, that is, the humble, blessed above all others" (St. Matthew 5:3).

5. Abba Sarmatias said: "I prefer a sinful man who, nonetheless, recognizes that he has sinned and who repents to a man who has not sinned and fancies that he is perhaps virtuous."

6. In a certain city there lived a Bishop who, by the activity of Satan, fell into fornication. A few days later there was a Liturgy in the church, and, without anyone knowing the Bishop's sin, he made a confession in front of all the people, saying: "I have fallen into fornication." As soon as he had uttered these words, he took off his *Omophorion* and placed it on the Holy Table. "I can no longer be a Bishop," he said. In the wake of this scene of sincere confession, the people were all seized with emotion and cried out in lamentation: "Let this sin be upon us; only remain in the Episcopate." "If you want me to remain with you," answered the Bishop, "do what I tell you." He immediately ordered all the doors of the church to be shut, fell on his face at a side door, and said to the people: "Anyone who does not tread on me when he leaves the church is not on the side of God." All of the people did as the Bishop told them; that is to say, they trod on him as they departed. As the last person left, a voice was heard from Heaven saying: "I have forgiven the Bishop his sin because of his great humility."

7. An Elder said: "I prefer a defeat accompanied by humility to a victory accompanied by pride."

8. An Elder said: "Humility has often saved many, even without effort; this is demonstrated by the Publican and the Prodigal Son, who said only a few words and were saved."****

9. An Elder said that the Fathers before us entered the Kingdom of Heaven by their strictness; but let us, if we can do so by kindness, enter through humility.

10. Abba Isaiah said: "We need humility more than any other virtue; let us always be ready, whatever word we might say or hear, or whatever we might do, to say 'forgive me'; for through humility, all of the evil works of the Devil are foiled."

* The "*thymele*" was a podium (platform) that was found in the middle of ancient theaters, two to three steps off the ground. The chorus leader would ascend the first step in order to arrange and regulate the chorus of dancers round and round the *thymele*.

** As related in the Old Testament Book of Numbers (chapter 16), Dathan and Abiron were among the leading Hebrews who, under the leadership of Kore, rebelled against Moses when the Hebrew people were traversing the wilderness. It was then that Moses invoked the protection and aid of God, and "the earth opened, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that were with Kore, and their cattle, and they went down, and all that they had, alive into Hades" (Numbers 16:32-33).

*** He means Lucifer and his Angels, whom God cast down from Heaven on account of their pride.

**** The Publican said: "God be merciful to me, a sinner" (St. Luke 18:13), and the Prodigal Son said: "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son" (St. Luke 15:21).

Hypothesis XLV

A distinctive mark of the humble man is that he blames and disparages himself and thinks that his good deeds, howsoever many and whatsoever they may be, amount to nothing; what the characteristic traits of humility are, and what are its fruits.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Anthony said: "I saw all the snares of the Devil spread out over all the earth, and I groaned and said: 'What is it that bypasses these, without being trapped?' And I heard a voice saying to me: 'Humility.'"

2. The same Elder said to Abba Poimen: "A man's work is this: to assume responsibility for his sin before God and to expect temptation until his last breath."

3. Demons once rose up against Abba Arsenios and harassed him in his cell. When those who served him came and stood outside his cell, they heard him crying to God and saying: "O my God, do not abandon me, for I have never done anything good in Thy sight. But grant me according to the measure of Thy goodness to make a beginning."

4. A brother visited Abba Ammonas and said to him: "Abba, give me a word." He stayed with the Elder for seven days, but heard nothing from him. Then, when he was leaving, Abba Ammonas said to him, as he escorted him out: "Up to this day, my sins have become a wall of darkness between me and God."

5. Abba Daniel recounted that there once lived in Babylon a young woman, the daughter of a governor of that place, who had a demon inside her. The father of this girl knew a monk, whom he loved and whom he persisted in asking to heal his daughter. The monk replied to him: "No one can heal your daughter, except some anchorites whom I know. But if we summon them, out of modesty they will not consent to do

such a thing. It is preferable for us to do the following: When they come to market to sell their handiwork, pretend that you want to buy their wares and invite one of them to your house in order to make payment. When they come, ask them to pray for your daughter; I believe that if they do this, she will be cured."

So, they went out to the marketplace and found the disciple of a certain Elder, who was sitting there to sell his handiwork. The governor's men took him and his baskets and led him to the governor's residence, so that he might receive payment for his wares. However, as soon as he entered, the demonized girl ran up to him and slapped him. The monk then turned the other cheek, putting into practice the commandment of the Lord: "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (St. Matthew 5:39). This behavior tormented the demon, who said with ghastly cries, "Oh, such violence! The commandment of Jesus expels me," and immediately left the woman; at that moment, she became healthy and returned to her right mind. This incident was made known to the Elders, who glorified God and said that nothing so annihilates the pride of the Devil as the humility that the commandments of Christ inspire.

6. Abba Carion said: "I have toiled more than my son Zacharias, and yet I have not attained to the measure of his virtue, on account of his humility and silence."

7. On one occasion, when the same Abba Zacharias was staying in Sketis, he had a vision. He arose at once and reported it to his Elder, Abba Carion. The latter, being a man of practical virtue, had no knowledge of these phenomena. He got up from where he was sitting and thrashed Zacharias, saying: "Perhaps this vision came from demons." But since Abba Zacharias continued to have the vision, he left his cell one night and went to Abba Poimen. After finding Abba Poimen, he recounted the vision to him and how he felt a burning sensation inside himself. The Elder realized that this phenomenon came from God and said to Zacharias: "Go to such-and such an Elder and take to heart whatever he tells you." Abba Zacharias went off to this Elder, who, before Zacharias even opened his mouth and told him anything, gave a detailed account of his situation and said to him in conclusion: "This vision is from God, but go and submit to your spiritual Father."

8. Abba Moses once asked this same Zacharias: "Tell me, Elder, what

should I do?" No sooner did Abba Zacharias hear this, than he fell at the Abba's feet and said to him: "Are you asking me, Father?" Abba Moses then said to him: "Believe me, Zacharias, my child, I saw the Holy Spirit descending on you and that is why I am compelled to ask you." Zacharias then took his monastic hat from his head and placed it under his feet; and trampling on it, he said: "Unless a man is crushed in this way, he cannot be a monk."

9. Abba Poimen related that when Abba Zacharias was about to die, Abba Moses asked him: "What do you see, Abba?" He replied: "Is it not better to be silent, Father?" "Yes, my child," responded Abba Moses, "be silent." At the moment of his death, Abba Isidore, who was sitting nearby, raised his eyes to Heaven and said: "Rejoice, Zacharias, my child, because the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven have been opened for you."

10. Abba Evagrios said: "The beginning of salvation is for a man to reproach himself."

11. Abba Theodore was once relaxing with some other monks. While they were eating, they took up their glasses in silence and did not say the familiar invocation, "Forgive me."* Abba Theodore then said: "Monks have lost their manners by not saying: 'Forgive me.'"

12. A brother once told the same Abba Theodore: "I want to fulfill the commandments." The Elder replied to him: "Abba Thomas once said: 'I want to fulfill my thoughts as God wills.' So he immediately went to the oven and made bread. When asked for some by certain paupers, he gave them all of the bread. When some other paupers asked him for alms, he gave them the baskets in which he kept the bread, as well as the garment that he was wearing. He went into his cell wearing only the *maphorion* which monks throw around their shoulders;** but even after such almsgiving, he reproached himself, saying: 'I have not fulfilled the commandment of God as I should have done.'"

13. A brother said to Abba Theodore: "Give me a word of consolation, for I am perishing." And then, with sorrow, Abba Theodore replied: "I am in danger of perishing, and thus what can I tell you?"

14. The esteemed Archbishop Theophilos once went to the mountain

of Nitria. He was visited by the spiritual Father of the ascetics of that mountain. The Archbishop asked him: "Father, what further have you discovered on this path of asceticism?" The Elder answered: "Always to consider ourselves blameworthy for everything and to reproach ourselves." "Truly," the Archbishop agreed, "there is no other way than this."

15. When the same Archbishop went to Sketis, the brothers gathered together and said to Abba Pambo: "Say a word to the Pope (Patriarch),*** that he might be edified." The Elder replied: "If he does not profit from my silence, neither will he profit from my speech."

16. Amma Theodora used to say that neither asceticism nor hardship, nor any kind of toil, saves, except for genuine humility. She told this story: "There was an anchorite who was going to exorcise some demons. First, he asked them: 'By what power are you driven from a man? By fasting?' 'We neither eat nor drink,' they replied. 'By vigil?' And they said: 'We do not sleep at all.' 'By withdrawal from the world?' 'No,' they answered, 'we inhabit the deserts.' When the Elder persisted in asking in what way they were driven out, they confessed: 'Nothing defeats us except humility.'"

17. Abba John the Short said: "Humility and fear of God are above all the other virtues."

18. Again, he said: "Who sold Joseph?" One of the brothers responded: "His brothers." "No," the Elder rejoined, "it was his humility that sold him. He could have said, when he was being sold, 'I am your brother,' and argued with them. But in silence and humility he let himself be sold; and his humility made him the ruler of Egypt.'"

19. Again, he said: "Having let go of a light burden, namely, self-reproach, we have taken up the heaviest, namely, self-justification."

20. One of the Fathers said about Abba John that "through his humility, he has the whole of Sketis hanging on his little finger."

21. Abba John the Theban said: "A monk should attain humility before all else; for this is the first commandment of the Savior, Who said: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit [i.e., the humble—*Trans.*], for theirs is the

Kingdom of Heaven'" (St. Matthew 5:3).

22. Abba Poimen said about Abba Isidore that every night he would braid a bundle of palm branches; and the brothers, seeing him toil, would beseech him, saying: "Relax a little, for you are now old." But he would reply to them: "Even if they burn Isidore and scatter his ashes to the wind, I will still have no respite; for the Son of God came into the world for our sake."

23. The same Elder said likewise about Abba Isidore, that when his thoughts said to him, "You are now a great ascetic," he would reply to them: "Am I perhaps like Abba Anthony? Or perhaps I have become perfect like Abba Pambo? Or, finally, perhaps I have attained the stature of the other Fathers who pleased God?" By responding in this way he gave himself rest, and the thoughts withdrew and fled. When, once more, the enemies of our soul, the demons, caused him to be discouraged by telling him that after all this he would be cast into Hell, he would reply to them: "Even if I am cast into Hell, I will assuredly find you beneath me."

24. Abba Longinos said that just as a corpse does not feel anything or judge anyone, so the man who is humble of mind cannot judge anyone, even if he should see him worshipping idols.

25. Abba Matoes said: "The closer a man comes to God, all the more does he see himself to be a sinner; for when the Prophet Isaiah saw God in his vision, he called himself wretched and unclean" (Isaiah 6:5).

26. The same Elder said: "When I was young, I thought that I was perhaps doing something good; but now that I am an old man, I see that I have not even one good deed to show."

27. A brother asked Abba Matoes: "How can the monks of Sketis succeed in doing more than the commandment says; that is, loving their enemies more than themselves?" "Up to now," replied the Elder, "I have not loved even Him Who loves me as much as I love myself."

28. Abba Jacob said: "I once visited Abba Matoes. As I was leaving, I said to him: 'I want to visit the (hermits') Cells .' 'Greet Abba John on my behalf,' said the Elder. So when I went to Abba John, I told him:

'Abba Matoes greets you.' The Elder responded with delight: 'Abba Matoes is an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!' (St. John 1:47).

"After a year, I visited Abba Matoes again and conveyed Abba John's greeting to him. He answered modestly: 'I am not worthy of the Elder's praise. Know this, however: that when you hear an Elder honoring his neighbor more than himself, you can be sure that this man has attained to great heights; for this is precisely what perfection is, that a man honors his neighbor more than himself.'"

29. A brother besought Abba Matoes: "Father, say something that will benefit me." "Go and beseech God," replied the Elder, "to give you mourning and humility in your heart; always be mindful of your sins; never judge others, but become lower than everyone else. Cut off familiarity from yourself and restrain your tongue and your belly. And if someone talks about a certain subject, do not argue with him; but if he speaks well, say 'Yes' to him, and if he speaks badly, tell him, 'You know what you are talking about,' and do not quarrel with him about what he has said. This is humility."

30. Abba Xanthias said: "A dog is better than I, for he has love and does not judge."

31. A brother asked Abba Alonios: "What does it mean to debase oneself?" The Elder answered: "It means to believe that you are lower even than the dumb beasts and to recognize that they, unlike you, are not accountable for what they do."

32. Abba Poimen said that when a man reproaches himself, he will have endurance and patience in every circumstance.

33. The same Elder said that when a man succeeds in grasping the saying of the Apostle, "Unto the pure all things are pure" (St. Titus 1:15), he sees himself as being lower than all of God's creatures. A brother who heard this said to him: "How can I reckon myself lower than a murderer?" The Elder replied: "If a man attains to the measure of this saying, such that he acquires purity, and sees a man engaging in murder, he will say: 'He has committed only this one sin; but I commit murder daily.'"

34. The same brother put the same question also to Abba Anoub,

telling him the opinion of Abba Poimen. On hearing him, Abba Anoub replied: "What he told you was right; this is how it is. For if a man attains to the measure of this saying, such that he acquires purity and sees the sins of his brother, he succeeds, by the power of his virtue, in swallowing them up (that is, in overlooking them)." "And what is this virtue?" asked the brother a second time. "Self-reproach," answered Abba Anoub; "for he who reproaches himself justifies his neighbor, and this righteousness conceals his neighbor's sins."

35. It was said of Abba Poimen that he was never willing to maintain his own opinion against that of another Elder (or even to give the appearance of so doing); thus, he would praise him, regardless of the situation. Indeed, those who knew him related the following: If he was visited by some believers, he would first send them to Abba Anoub, since the latter was his senior in years. For his part, Abba Anoub would tell them: "Go to my brother Poimen, because he has the gift of teaching." If at any time it happened that Abba Anoub and Abba Poimen were sitting together, Abba Poimen did not speak at all, since Abba Anoub was present.

36. Abba Poimen used to tell how he heard the Blessed Abba Anthony say: "The greatest deed that a man can do is to assume responsibility for his sin before God and expect temptation until his last breath."

37. On another occasion, Abba Poimen said, groaning: "All of the virtues have entered this house, except for one; without it a man suffers torment and vexation." "Which is this?" he was asked. He replied: "That a man should reproach himself."

38. In another instance, the same Elder said: "If a man keeps his rule, he suffers no disturbance; this is precisely why we fall into many temptations—because we do not attend to our rule and our affairs. We learn from the Old Testament regarding Abigail, that she said to David, 'The sin is mine,' and that David listened to her and fell in love with her (I Kings 25:24).**** Abigail symbolizes our soul and David the Godhead. If the soul reproaches itself before God, then the Lord loves it."

39. Abba Poimen said: "I say that wherever Satan is hurled, there I, too, am hurled."

40. Abba Poimen said: "A man always needs humility and the fear of God, just as he needs air in order to breathe."

41. The same Abba said: "Humbling yourself before God, reckoning that you are nothing, and setting aside your will—all of these are tools of the soul."

42. A brother asked Abba Poimen: "To what should I attend, when I am sitting in my cell?" "Up to now," replied the Elder, "I am a man who has been submerged in mud up to his neck, carrying a heavy burden around my neck and crying out to God: 'Have mercy on me.'"

43. The same Elder said: "If a brother visits you and you see that you are deriving no benefit at all from his coming, look into your mind and find out what thought you had before the brother came to your cell. From this examination, you will understand what it was that made this visit unprofitable and that you were the cause of it. If you carry out this advice with humility, you will be blameless with regard to your neighbor, since you will blame yourself and will bear the burden of your own faults. If a man sits piously in his cell, he will not sin; for God is ever before him. As I see it, a man acquires fear of God by remaining piously in his cell."

44. On another occasion he said: "The Elders were once sitting at the table, and Abba Alonios was standing up and serving them as they ate. The Elders praised him, but he did not reply at all. One of the Elders then said to him privately: 'Why did you not respond at all to the Elders when they praised you?' 'If I were to respond to them,' said Abba Alonios, 'I would be accepting their praise.'"

45. In another instance he said: "The ground on which God commanded us to offer sacrifice is humility."

46. Abba Sisoes said: "He who knowingly possesses humility fulfills the whole of Scripture."

47. A brother once visited Abba Sisoes on the mountain of Abba Anthony; while they were conversing, he asked the Elder: "Father, have you not by now attained to the stature of Abba Anthony?" "If I had a single one of Abba Anthony's thoughts," answered Abba Sisoes, "I

Abba Sisoes before the tomb of Alexander the Great

would be entirely ablaze."

48. Another brother asked him: "Abba, I perceive that the remembrance of God remains with me." "It is not important that your mind is with God," replied the Elder. "What is important is that you see yourself as being below all other creatures. This is why physical labor leads to humility."

49. Abba Sisoes said to a brother: "How are you doing?" "I waste my days, Father," answered the brother. "If I were to waste a single day," said the Elder, "I would be grateful; that is to say, if I were to pass a single day without adding to my sins, I would be grateful."

50. Three Elders once visited Abba Sisoes, after having heard of him. The first of them said to him: "Father, how can I be saved from the gnashing of teeth and the unsleeping worm?" Abba Sisoes did not give him an answer. The second asked: "Father, how can I be saved from the gnashing of teeth and the unsleeping worm?" Abba Sisoes did not reply to him, either. The third one said: "Father, what am I to do, for from my fear of the recollection of the outer darkness, I cannot even breathe?" The Elder then said to them: "I do not think about any of these things, but I hope that God, compassionate as He is, will have mercy on me." On hearing this reply, the Elders were upset and got up to leave. But Abba Sisoes, since he did not want to let them go away in distress, said to them: "You are blessed, brothers. Truly, I envy you; for if your minds are always dominated by such thoughts, it is impossible for you to sin. But what am I to do, hard-hearted as I am, for I have not been granted to know even whether there is a punishment for men? Because of this I sin every hour." When the Elders heard these words of Abba Sisoes, they repented of their previous thoughts and said: "Just as we have heard, so too have we seen."

51. Abba Sisoes***** used to say that the way that leads to humility is abstinence, unceasing prayer to God, and the struggle to be lower than every man.

52. He also said: "It is written in the Old Testament that idols have a mouth, but will not speak; they have eyes, but do not see; ears have they, but they do not hear. This is how a monk should also be. Just as idols are an abomination, so also should he think that he is an abomi-

nation."

53. A monk asked Abba Kronios: "Father, in what way does a man arrive at humility?" "Through fear of God," replied the Elder. "And how does he arrive at the fear of God?" the brother asked a second time. "In my opinion," answered the Elder again, "it is by withdrawing oneself from everything, giving himself over to physical labor, and, as far as he is able, thinking about the departure of the soul from the body and about the judgment of God."

54. On one occasion, Abba Makarios was returning from the marsh to his cell and was carrying palm leaves. The Devil met him on the road with a scythe. He tried to strike him, but was unable to do so; and then he said to him: "Great (spiritual) power emanates from you, Makarios, and this is why I cannot do anything against you; for see, whatever you do, that I do also: you fast, and so do I; you do not sleep, and I never sleep at all. There is only one respect in which you beat me." "What is this?" Abba Makarios asked him. "Your humility," the Devil answered, "and this is why I cannot do anything against you."

55. Abba Hyperechios said: "Humility is a tree of life that rises up to the height of Heaven."

56. An Elder said: "He who has humility humbles the demons; he who does not have humility is a plaything of the demons."

57. The same Elder said: "Do not be humble only in speech, but also be humble of mind; for without humility, it is impossible to be exalted in Godly works."

58. To a great anchorite who said, "Why do you make war on me, Satan?" Satan replied: "It is you, with your humility, who war mightily against me."

59. The Elders used to say: "Humility is a crown for the monk."

60. An Elder was once asked, "When does the soul acquire humility?" He answered: "When it thinks about its own vices."

61. An Elder said: "Just as the earth never falls down, neither does

the man who humbles himself."

62. Once upon a time there were two brothers in the flesh who lived in the same place. The Devil attempted to separate the one from the other. One day, when the younger was lighting a lamp, a demon set to work and turned over the lampstand, which knocked the lamp down. So, the older brother beat him in anger. Instead of getting angry, the younger brother made a prostration and said to him: "Forgive me, my brother, and I will light it again." With such humility from the younger brother, the power of the Lord immediately came forth and destroyed all of the demon's power; he went to his chief, who was residing in a pagan temple, and reported the event to him.

A pagan priest heard the demon recounting this; and recognizing his error, he was Baptized and became a monk. From the beginning of his monastic life he maintained humility, saying: "Humility destroys all the power of the Enemy, as I myself heard from the Devil, who stated: 'When I provoke some disturbance among monastics and one of them backs down and makes a prostration in order to seek forgiveness, all my power is wiped out immediately.'"

63. An Elder said: "He who has humility is not angered, nor does he anger anyone."

64. An Elder was asked: "Why do demons war on us so much?" "Because we throw our weapons away," answered the Elder; "and by weapons I mean dishonor, humility, non-acquisitiveness, and patience."

65. An Elder was asked: "What is humility?" He replied: "When your brother sins against you and you forgive him before he asks your forgiveness."

66. It was said of Abba Sisoes that he once fell ill; the Elders sat beside him and asked him: "Abba, what do you see?" He replied: "I see some beings who have come for me, and I am imploring them to allow me to repent a little." Then one of the Elders asked him again: "And if they allow you this, can you still use the time for repentance?" "Even if I cannot," replied Abba Sisoes, "I can groan a little over my soul, and this is sufficient for me."

67. Once some people went to the Thebaid to an Elder, taking with

them a demonized man for him to cure. The Elder refused, since he did not consider himself worthy; but after they implored him many times, he said to the demon: "Come out of God's creature." The demon answered: "I am coming out; but I ask you to tell me one thing: Who are the goats and who are the sheep?" "I am the goats," replied the Elder, "and as for the sheep, God knows who they are." As soon as the demon heard this answer, he cried out with a loud voice: "I am coming out because of your humility"; and at that very moment, he came out of the demonized man.

68. The Elders used to say that when we are not undergoing warfare, it is then that we are in greater need of being humbled, since God, knowing our infirmity, covers us. But if we are boastful, God removes His protection from us and we go to perdition.

69. A brother asked an Elder: "What does it mean for a man to progress according to God?" "A man's progress is humility," replied the Elder. "The more a man descends to humility, the more he is raised up in progress."

70. An Elder said that if one humbles himself and says to someone, "Forgive me," he burns up the demons.

71. If the farmer did not cover the eyes of his beast, it would turn round and devour the fruits of his labors. The same thing happens with us. By God's dispensation, we receive coverings for our eyes, lest we see the good deeds that we do and call ourselves blessed, thereby losing our reward. This is why God allows us, from time to time, to have unclean thoughts—and we notice only these, in order that we may censure ourselves. For us, these internal pollutions serve to cover our meagre goodness; for when a man reproaches himself, then he does not lose his reward.

72. An Elder was asked: "What is humility?" He replied: "Humility is a great and Divine work; the path that leads to humility consists in bodily labors and in considering yourself a sinner beneath everyone else." The brother who had posed the question asked again: "What does it mean to be beneath everyone else?" The Elder replied: "It means not to be concerned about the sins of others, but only about your own, and to pray to God unceasingly."

73. In a *cœnobion* there lived a monk who took upon himself all of the burdens of the brethren and who reached the point of accusing himself even of fornication, saying: "I have committed this sin." Some of the monks, who were not aware of his virtue, began to murmur against him and to say: "See how many evil things he does, and he works no good."

The Abbot, who was familiar with the deeds of this monk, said to his accusers: "I prefer a single rush mat plaited by him with humility to all yours that you plait with pride.* If you like, I will give you proof of this from God." He ordered a fire to be lighted. He had each monk bring three rush mats that he had plaited, asking the accused monk to bring one of his own, as well. Then he commanded that the mats be thrown into the fire. As soon as they were thrown into the fire, all those made by the accusers were burned, while that of the accused brother was not. When his former accusers saw this miracle, they were frightened and made a prostration to the monk whom they had accused, thereafter honoring him as a Father.

74. A monk, when offended by a certain person, made a prostration to the one who offended him.

75. An Elder related the following incident. Once upon a time there were two men who lived in the world. They came to an agreement and left the world to become monks. Carried away by zeal, but not aware that this was a sin, they made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, thinking that in this way they were fulfilling the Gospel precept (St. Matthew 19:12). On hearing of this, the Archbishop excommunicated them. They were angry with him, reckoning that they had done what was right. They went to the Archbishop of Jerusalem and reported the matter to him; but he, likewise, excommunicated them. Next they went to the Archbishop of Antioch, but he did the same thing. Finally, they went to the Pope of Rome, since he was considered to be first in honor among the other Archbishops, who were, to be sure, brothers and equals,** but they heard the same decision from him, too; that is, the confirmation of their ecclesiastical sentence.

In perplexity, they said to one another: "The one agrees with the other, since they assemble together in Synods; but let us go to the Saint of God, Epiphanios, the Bishop of Cyprus, and he will surely reveal the truth to us, for he is a prophet and is no respecter of persons." As they drew near to entering the city, their intention was disclosed by God to the Saint, and he immediately dispatched men to meet them, ordering

them not even to enter the city. Then they recovered from the confusion of their sin and said: "Truly we have perpetrated a sin; let us suppose that they excommunicated us unjustly; could it be that this prophet also wronged us? Behold, God revealed our intention to him." And they began to condemn themselves in the strongest terms.

When God saw that their hearts were humbled and that they had admitted their error, He informed St. Epiphanios, who, of his own accord, summoned them. After consoling them, he accepted them into ecclesiastical communion. He wrote at once to the Archbishop of Alexandria: "Receive your spiritual children, for they have truly repented."

The Elder concluded that this is what it means for a man to be cured: that he should recognize his error and admit his culpability before God. If he does so, the Grace of God will inform other men about such a man's repentance and spiritual condition.

76. There was a brother who lived in the (hermits') Cells and who had attained to such humility that he always prayed to God: "Lord, strike me with a thunderbolt; for when I am healthy, I disobey Thee."

77. An Elder said: "If a man wearies himself in constantly reproving, humbling, and disparaging his soul, without making a show of it, in the end he persuades it that it has less value than dogs and beasts; for they, as animals, neither anger their Creator nor enter into judgment. Therefore, it is much better for me not to rise up in judgment than to rise up and be punished eternally."

78. A monk visited an Elder and asked him: "How are you doing, Father?" "Badly," answered the Elder. "Why so, Abba?" asked the brother again. "Look, I have been standing before God for eighteen years and cursing myself daily, saying: 'Cursed are they which do err from Thy commandments' (Psalm 118:21)." On hearing this self-reproach of the Elder, the brother departed, greatly edified by the Elder's humility.

79. An Elder said: "If you stay in your cell and practice stillness, do not entertain the thought that you are doing something important, but rather regard yourself as a dog that has been chased out of a village because it bites and assaults people."

80. An Elder said: "If you dwell in the desert and you see that God looks after you, do not let your heart be puffed up; for if you do, God

will take His help away from you. But rather say to yourself: 'God is merciful to me because of my negligence and weakness, that I might endure and not become exhausted.'"

81. An Elder said: "If you hear of the wondrous lives of the Holy Fathers and feel warmth in your heart, and if you wish to emulate them, you should undertake this by invoking the Name of the Lord, that He might strengthen you in the task that you have chosen. And if, with God's help, you successfully fulfill this goal of yours, be thankful to Him Who helped you; but if you cannot fulfill it, recognize your weakness until your dying day, regarding yourself as inept, poor, and impatient. You should always rebuke your soul for beginning something and not completing it. In this way you can be saved."

82. Abba Makarios once went from Sketis to the mountain of Nitria for the Feast Day [Name Day—*Trans.*] of Abba Pambo. The Elders said to him: "Tell the brethren something edifying, Father." "I have not yet become a monk," he replied; "but I have seen monks. On one occasion I was sitting in my cell in Sketis and was bothered by thoughts of leaving, which told me: 'Go away into the desert and take note of what you see there.' I remained fighting against this thought for five years, fearing lest it came from demons.

"But since the thought persisted, I went into the desert, and there I found a lake, and in the middle of it an island. The wild animals of the desert came to this lake to drink. In the midst of these animals, I saw two naked men, and I was frightened, because I thought that they were spirits. When they saw me frightened, they said to me: 'Do not be afraid; we, too, are men.' 'Where are you from?' I asked them. 'And how did you get to this desert?' 'We are from a *cœnobion*,' they answered; 'but we agreed to come out to this place, where we have been for forty years now. One of us is an Egyptian and the other is a Libyan. But tell us, how is the world? Does it have enough water••• and abundant harvests?' 'Yes, all is well,' I replied to them. 'But tell me, I beg you: How do I become a monk?' 'If one does not renounce all the things of this world, he cannot become a monk,' they replied to me. 'I am weak and cannot do what you do,' I said to them a second time. 'If you cannot do what we do,' they replied to me again, 'then stay in your cell and weep for your sins.' 'When winter comes, do you not tremble from the cold?' I asked them. 'And do your bodies not burn up in the tropical heat?'•••• 'God has provided for us,' they responded, 'that we should neither shiver in

winter nor suffer harm from the heat.'

"This," the Elder concluded, "is why I said to you: 'I have not yet become a monk, but I have seen monks.' Forgive me, brethren."

83. Once upon a time, when Abba Anthony the Great was praying in his cell, a voice came to him that said: "Anthony, you have not yet attained to the stature of such and such a cobbler, who lives in Alexandria." So the Elder arose in the morning and, taking his palmwood staff, went to this cobbler. After entering his house and greeting him, he sat next to him and said: "Tell me, brother, of your deeds." "Abba, I am not aware of having done anything good, except that when I get up in the morning to sit in my workshop, I say to myself: 'All the inhabitants of this city, from the least to the greatest, are going to enter the Kingdom of Heaven because of their righteousness, while I alone will inherit Hell because of my sins.' And again, in the evening, before I go to sleep, I say the same thing." On hearing this, the Elder said: "In truth, you are like a goldsmith; you sit in your house, at rest, and you have inherited the Kingdom; but I, with my lack of discernment, have been living all my life in the desert, yet I have not caught up with you."

Be careful, reader, lest you understand this story in an undiscerning and simplistic manner and be harmed rather than edified by it. You should not suppose that this one activity of a man living in the world, which does not in itself involve any toil, is preferable to the entire ascetic life of the founder and leader of the ascetic Fathers, who received his reward in proportion to his own labor (I Corinthians 3:8), was glorified by God more than all of the other Fathers, and has been assigned to the same place where God is, as it was revealed to one of the Saints.

For if the cobbler, solely on account of his pious thought, were to be preferred above St. Anthony the Great—this fiery pillar, who enlightened the inhabited earth, as one of the Saints has said of him—why is it that the cobbler is not put forward as an example for all to imitate? And why do we not all take care to make ourselves more like him, having reckoned him to be better, when, indeed, it is so easy for us to imitate him? And why is it, leaving aside the cobbler, that we monastics look to the life of the wondrous Anthony as an archetype, each of us striving to make his life equal to that of the great Anthony? And this, indeed, when it is so laborious for us to attempt to liken ourselves to him, few succeeding completely in this endeavor? (I think, to be sure, that not even a few have been successful in this.)

It is clear, thus, that God, Who always humbles those who dedicate

themselves to Him—all those whom, as Scripture says, He receives (Proverbs 3:12)—and Who gave Paul a thorn in the flesh, so that he might not be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations (II Corinthians 12:7-9), also safeguarded, by humility, St. Anthony the Great—who was filled with spiritual attainments and gifts—when he sought to ascertain the measure of perfection that he had reached. And it is clear that God, Who loves mankind, showed this ascetic to be a man who had not yet reached the measure of a cobbler, without, of course, lying—perish the thought!—but speaking the truth and what is actual. What measure does He set forth? The measure of this virtue possessed by the cobbler, who, as a man living in the world and frequently reproved by his conscience, had no great ideas about himself. For this reason, this man, being prudent and recognizing his own faults, reckoned in his heart that everyone else was virtuous, righteous, and worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven, while he condemned himself alone and considered himself an heir to eternal punishment.

And truly the man was worthy of praises and laudations, since, although he lived in the world, he had such an attitude. But not for this reason was he loftier than St. Anthony the Great; rather, he surpassed the Saint only because he regarded himself as more sinful than all other men. For although St. Anthony was humble of mind and, thanks to the energy of the Holy Spirit that was at work in him, did not consider himself worthy of anything, there was yet a conscious awareness that reminded him continually of his accomplishments and spiritual gifts, which he knew well that many others had forsaken. This is why he was unable to regard himself as more sinful than all other men, as did the cobbler, even though he was zealous to debase himself as much as he could. In this respect, therefore, the cobbler conquered St. Anthony the Great. Thus, in pointing out the cobbler to him, God at once spoke the truth and guided His son by Grace—Anthony the Great—to greater humility. Let this be the difference for you, also, in the case of other Saints, in whom something similar has been revealed or uttered by God.

B. From St. Ephraim

1. The beginning of the bearing of fruit is the flower, and the beginning of humility is submission in the Lord; for he who acquires submissiveness is compliant, readily obedient, gentle, and accords honor to both small and great; and I believe that such a one will receive eternal life as a reward from the Lord.

2. A brother said: "I asked this favor of the Lord: that when my brother tells me to do something, I might say to myself, 'He is your lord, listen to him'; that if another brother should give me an instruction, I might say again in my mind, 'He is the brother of your lord'; and that if a boy should order me to do something, I might say, 'Listen to the son of your lord.'" In thus opposing hostile thoughts, the brother fulfilled everything he was told without disturbance and with the coöperation of Divine Grace, which furnished him with the humility that he had.

C. From Abba Isaiah

1. He who has humility has no tongue with which to reprove one who is negligent or one who disdains him; nor does he have eyes to observe another's failings or ears to hear what does not benefit his soul; nor does he have any relation to anything other than his own sins. Rather, he is peaceable towards all men, on account of God's commandment, and not on account of friendship. For if one fasts for six days and gives himself over to mighty labors, all of his labors are in vain if he does not traverse the way of humility.

2. Brother, accustom your tongue to saying, "Forgive me,"••••• and humility will come to you; love humility, and it will shield you from your sins.

3. Do not be lethargic in any labor; for labor, hardship, and silence give birth to humility—and humility forgives every sin. Know this: that to the extent that a man is careless, he thinks in his heart that he is a friend of God; but if he is freed from the passions, he is ashamed to raise his eyes to Heaven in the presence of God, because he then sees how far away from God he is.

4. A man had two slaves, and he sent them into the fields so that each of them could harvest his *stata* at the rate of seven per day.† The first of these slaves put forth all of his efforts to fulfill what he had been commanded by his master, but could not succeed in completing it, since the task was beyond his capabilities. The other, being lazy, said to himself: "Who can do so much work every day?" Scorning his orders, he paid them no heed and fell asleep. He would sleep for an hour, then spend his time yawning for another hour. For the next hour, he would turn from side to side, like a door on its hinges. Thus did he wile away the

whole day aimlessly. When night fell, they both went to their owner. He questioned both of them, and when he found out about the remarkable work of the first, even though he had not succeeded in carrying out the assignment, he was nonetheless impressed by his eagerness and complimented him; but the lazy slave he dismissed from his house as a despiser of his commandments.

For our part, let us not be faint-hearted in any labor or trial, but let us expend all the might of our souls in working with humility. I believe that God will thus receive us with His Saints, who labored exceedingly.

5. Not wounding the conscience of your neighbor gives birth to humility; humility gives birth to discernment; and discernment destroys all the passions, after separating them one from another. It is, therefore, impossible for discernment to come to you, unless you first cultivate it, as the farmer cultivates his garden. For the benefit of your soul, you should first rest from looking at the deeds of others; this quietude gives birth to asceticism; asceticism gives birth to weeping; weeping gives birth to the fear of God; the fear of God gives birth to humility; humility gives birth to discernment; discernment gives birth to foresight; and foresight to love. Love renders the soul healthy and frees it from the passions. After all of this, a man then comes to understand how far he is, without these virtues, from God.

6. Not believing that your toil is pleasing to God leads to your being protected by God's help. For he who has dedicated his heart to God with piety and truth (that is, sincerely) cannot be preoccupied with the thought of whether he is pleasing to God. As long as his conscience reproves him for various bad deeds, he is a stranger to freedom. For as long as there is that which reproves (the conscience), there is that which accuses (sin). And as long as there is accusation, there is no freedom.

D. From Abba Mark

Just as it is foreign to one who is repenting to be prideful, so also is it impossible for one who willfully sins to be humble of mind. Humility is not the accusation of one's conscience, but the most profound and sure knowledge of God's Grace and His compassion for mankind. If we have cultivated humility, we have no need of chastisement. All of the evils and woes that happen to us are the result of our pride. For if the messenger of Satan was given to the Apostle Paul to test him, lest he

become conceited [*cf.* II Corinthians 12:7-9], assuredly much more will Satan himself be assigned to trample on us, the proud, until we are humbled.

Our forefathers were masters of houses, possessed wealth, had wives, and provided for children; still, in spite of all of this, they communed with God, on account of their unbounded humility. However, we have withdrawn from the world, spurned wealth, and forsaken our relatives, thinking that we are close to God; yet, in spite of all of this, the demons jeer at us because of our pride. He who is proud does not know himself; for if he knew himself, and his foolishness and his weakness, he would not be prideful. He who does not know himself—how can he know God? If he cannot understand the folly in which he is nurtured, how will he be able to understand the wisdom of God, from which he is so far removed and to which he is a complete stranger?

For he who knows God sees the majesty of God inside his soul, as in a mirror, and is humbled, as the Blessed Job says: "I have heard of Thee before by the ear; but now mine eye hath seen Thee. Wherefore I have counted myself vile and have melted; I regard myself as dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). Those who emulate Job see God; those who see Him know Him. If, therefore, we wish to see God, let us pity ourselves and be humble of mind, so that we may not only see Him face to face, but also delight in Him, having Him dwelling and residing in us. For in this way, our folly will be made wise through His wisdom and our weakness will be strengthened through His power, which will fortify us in our Lord Jesus Christ, Who deemed us worthy of this bounty.

E. From St. Diadochos

The virtue of humility is difficult to acquire, for the greater it is, the more the struggles needed to attain it. It comes to those who partake of holy knowledge in two ways: *viz.*, when the struggler for piety is halfway along the path of spiritual experience, then, either on account of physical weakness or because of people who are inimical to those pursuing righteousness, or on account of evil thoughts, he takes on a somewhat humbler attitude. But when the intellect is enlightened by Divine Grace and is completely conscious and assured of this enlightenment, then the soul possesses humility as a natural property, so to speak. For when it is imbued with Divine Grace, it can no longer become puffed up by love of glory, even when it fulfills the commandments of God unceasingly. Indeed, it considers itself more greatly hum-

ble, by reason of its communion with God's forbearance.

Of these two forms of humility, that which is born of spiritual experience is accompanied, for the most part, by sorrow and despondency, while the other is accompanied by joy and all-wise reverence. For, as I said, the first kind of humility comes to those who are in the midst of struggles, whereas the other is sent by God to those who are approaching perfection. This is why the humility that is generated in the first way often seems jeered by worldly prosperity, while the other is not affected even if one were to offer it all of the kingdoms of this world; nor does it feel the arrows of sin, since, being wholly spiritual, it is totally ignorant of material gifts. The struggler, therefore, should by all means pass through the first kind of humility, if he is to arrive at the second kind. For if the Grace of God does not soften our self-will beforehand, by testing it with the assaults of the passions, that is, without compelling us, it will not bestow on us the richness of spiritual humility.

F. From St. Maximos

Humility is constant prayer combined with tears and toil, for it always calls upon God for help and does not allow a man to be recklessly confident in his own abilities and wisdom or to behave arrogantly towards another; these are dangerous diseases of the passion of pride.

G. From Abba Isaac

The man who has succeeded in recognizing the measure of his weakness has attained to perfect humility and knowledge of God; for this reason, being ever moved to thanksgiving, he continually abounds in the gifts of Divine Grace. A mouth which always gives thanks to God receives God's blessing; and a heart that abides in continuous gratitude to God always receives an increase of Grace. Humility precedes Grace, just as pride runs before temptation.

* The invocation "forgive me" meant, for the Holy Fathers of that era, what the invocation "bless me" (*"eulogeson"*) means for monastics now.

** The *maphorion* was a wide garment which the monks would throw on their shoulders in the manner of a cape.

*** "Pope" is a title assigned to the Patriarch of Alexandria, alone of all the Orthodox Patriarchs. In all probability this is a reference to Theophilos of Alexandria, who was Patriarch from 385 to 412.

**** Abigail, whose name signifies "fountain of joy," was one of the wives of David; at one time, she was married to Nabal the Carmelite, a wealthy landowner. David came

to know her under the following circumstances: When he was being pursued by Saul, he wandered around in the wilderness of Maon with his retainers. He sent ten young men to Nabal to ask him for food on a day when the latter was on Mount Carmel, shearing his three thousand sheep and one thousand goats. This gift of food was to be in exchange for the protection which they were providing his flocks. In the East, the shearing of goats and sheep was a kind of festival and an opportunity for lively rejoicing and the giving of rich gifts (I Kings 25:9-13). But Nabal rudely turned them away.

David ordered four hundred men to make ready to punish Nabal. When Abigail learned of this, she loaded up abundant victuals on an ass and, unbeknownst to her husband, went to David, whose anger she succeeded in softening. The wisdom and beauty of Abigail impressed David, who sought her in marriage and, after the death of Nabal, took her as his wife (I Kings 25).

***** Concerning the wondrous end of St. Sisoes, see Hypothesis VII, Section D, above.

* The "rush mat" was a piece of handiwork which monks wove from straw.

** In the first centuries of Christianity, the Archbishop of Rome was regarded as first among equals among all of the Archbishops, since he was the Archbishop of the Church of Rome, which was the capital of the Roman Empire, and of a Church which the Apostle Peter had founded. Later on, the Popes appealed to these prerogatives in their desire to become the senior of all the Patriarchs and to acquire worldly power over all of the Churches and all Christians.

*** This was determined by whether the water of the River Nile rose or fell, periodically, in proportion to the rains.

**** It is well known that in those parts of the torrid zone, the temperature rises so much, and especially during the summer months, that everything is scorched by the heat during the day, while, conversely, during the night the temperature drops so much that a very bitter cold prevails.

***** For the meaning of "forgive me," see the pertinent note on the previous page.

† A "*staton*" was a section of land which a farmer would sow and later leave fallow for a while, so as to work another *staton*.

Hypothesis XLVI

Concerning what profit there is in reproaching ourselves.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

The Blessed Zosimas recounted the following: "I once stayed for a short while in the Lavra of Abba Gerasimos, where I gained a beloved brother. One day, while we were sitting and talking about spiritually profitable matters, we remembered the saying of Abba Poimen, that he who censures himself in all things finds spiritual rest. We also remembered the saying of the Abba of Mount Nitria, when he was asked: 'Father, what more have you found on this path?' He replied: 'That we should always censure and reprove ourselves.' The one who posed the question confirmed the wisdom of this answer when he said: 'Truly, there is no other path to perfection than this.'

"As we recalled these wise words, we said to each other in amazement: 'How much power the words of the Saints have!' For truly, whatever they utter comes from experience and life, and this is why their words have power, as St. Anthony the Great said—being uttered by men who were experienced and practical. As a certain sage said: 'Let your life confirm your words.' While we were conversing on these matters, that beloved brother said: 'I have experienced the value of these words and of the rest that comes upon the soul by putting them into practice.

"'I once had in this Lavra a true brother and friend, who was a Deacon. This Deacon—from what source I do not know—suspected me of being guilty in some matter, which caused him distress. For this reason, he began to behave rudely towards me. When I saw him acting testily around me, I asked him to tell me the reason for his displeasure with me. "I am annoyed by what you did," he replied, "and this is why I am upset with you." Since I could not imagine having done anything of the kind that he said I had done, I assured him that I had absolutely no idea what this was all about. However, he was not persuaded, but said to me: "Forgive me, I am not convinced by what you tell me."

"'After returning to my cell, I questioned myself in more detail, to see whether I had done any such thing, but I found nothing. After this, I saw this brother holding the Holy Cup and giving Communion to the

other brethren. I took the opportunity of informing him, in the name of what he was holding, that I was not aware of having done what he said; but not even in this way was he persuaded.

"'When I had collected myself again, I examined the past, calling to mind the words of the Holy Fathers (which I mentioned previously), and, believing sincerely in the truth of these words, I turned away my mind (from what I had been thinking hitherto) and said to myself: "The Deacon loves me sincerely, and moved by this love he plucked up the courage to tell me what fault he held against me in his heart, so that I might wake up and at least not repeat it in future. But, O miserable soul, when you say, 'I have not done this thing,' consider the other evils which you have committed and do not remember, and assume that, just as you do not remember all that you did yesterday and before that, so you did what he says and have forgotten it." With this thought, therefore, I convinced my heart that I had actually done this deed (about which the Deacon was distressed and about which I had no knowledge) and that I had forgotten about it, as I had also forgotten about other previous sins. After this, I began to thank God and the Deacon, because through the latter I was counted worthy of recognizing my sin and repenting for it.

"'After these reflections, I got up and went to the Deacon's cell in order to make a prostration before him, to ask his forgiveness, and at the same time to thank him. When I arrived, I stood outside his door and knocked. The Deacon opened it and, on seeing me, at once made a prostration to me first, saying: "Forgive me, for the demons made sport of me, and I suspected you of being implicated in this matter. But in truth, God informed me that you had nothing to do with it and did not know anything about it." No sooner had I begun to reply and assure him, than he stopped me and said: "There is no need for you to go any further."'"

And Abba Zosimas concluded: "See how genuine repentance so disposed the heart of one who truly desired it, such that he was not scandalized by the Deacon, even when, on the one hand, the latter suspected him of doing something about which he knew nothing and was grieved at him without good reason, and, on the other hand, did not accept his explanations, which were of the sort that would persuade even an enemy, and much more so a friend. Not only, indeed, was he not scandalized about all of this, as we have said, but he also ascribed to himself a sin which he had not committed, since he considered the Deacon's word to be more trustworthy than his own heart. And not only this, but

he undertook to make a prostration to the Deacon and to thank him for having freed him from responsibility for a sin about which he had absolutely no knowledge.

"Do you see what power humility, that is, self-reproach, has? And to what heights of spiritual advancement it raises one who possesses it? If, therefore, we were to take care of our hearts in this way and to train them with thoughts of humility, it would be impossible for the Enemy to find any place in our souls to sow evil seeds in us. But since he finds us bereft of every good thought, or, rather, since we dispose ourselves towards evil, he is given opportunities by us to sow his seeds within us; and in this way, he turns us from men into demons.

"It is the function of demons to disturb men and always to be disturbed, which is contrary to what happens with virtue; for if the Lord sees a soul that thirsts to be saved and which cultivates—or is eager to cultivate—good thoughts and displays a laudable desire for the good, He bestows His Grace upon this soul, through which it is raised to a very high level of progress within a short time, as Scripture says: 'With those who desire the good God coöperates for the good' [*cf.* Romans 8:28]."

Hypothesis XLVII

That we should not seek honor or desire privileges; for whatever men reckon to be honorable is an abomination to God.

A. From St. Ephraim

Brother, why do you err, being enticed by the Devil to gain in status—from which you will derive no benefit—by conferring honor upon yourself? Hear what the Apostle says: "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (II Corinthians 10:18). The Lord also says: "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" (St. John 5:44). Come to your senses, my beloved, and reflect on why you renounced the vanity of life and the Devil and his pride, and stop thinking any longer about worldly things. Do you not know that if you humiliate your neighbor, you commit the sin of self-love and vainglory? Consider this fact: You have esteemed yourself more highly than your brother and put yourself before him out of contentiousness and egotism—and this because you were not willing to humble yourself before your brother. Now, will this vainglory commend you to God and will it entitle you to preferential treatment in Heaven? In no way, since God Himself said: "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (St. Matthew 20:26-27).

Beware, then, my brother, lest in wanting to take precedence over your brother you come last there, in the age to come, and heed what that glory-loving rich man heard when he was being tortured in the unquenchable fire: "Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things" (St. Luke 16:25); for Scripture says: "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (St. Luke 16:15). Reckon, therefore, my brother, that you have died to the world and that your life is hidden with Christ in God [*cf.* Colossians 3:3]: "When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:4). But as it is, do not love the glory of men; for this earthly glory does not last you forever, as the Apostle says: "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass"

(I St. Peter 1:24). So cast off this yoke of the Enemy and his pride, my beloved, and place your neck under the sweet yoke of the Master; for He said, "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (St. Luke 14:11); and elsewhere He says: "The Lord resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (I St. Peter 5:5).

Let us fear, then, my beloved, lest God, the Righteous Judge, say of us, "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (St. John 12:43); and let us humble ourselves before all, for the Lord's sake, that we might attain to rest both on earth and in Heaven, for He Himself said: "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (St. Matthew 11:29). Know this also, my brother, that in worldly life the eloquent man is praised, but that in monastic life he who loves stillness and silence is great in the sight of God. Again, among worldly people, he who adorns his body and frequently changes his clothes has human glory, whereas in this calling, he who despises clothing and attends only to the vital needs of the body is considered praiseworthy, as the Apostle Paul says: "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (I St. Timothy 6:8). He who thinks and acts in this way insures for himself glory in the heavens.

Again, in worldly life he who boasts of his bodily strength or his wealth is regarded by men as great; but in our monastic way of life, he who loves humility and frugality is truly lofty and excellent, as Holy Scripture says: "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world...to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence" (I Corinthians 1:27-29). Let us, therefore, love what is pleasing to the Lord, as good and grateful servants, and let us no longer be eager to please men; for, as the Apostle Paul says: "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10), since "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (I St. John 5:19), as it is said elsewhere.

Hypothesis XLVIII

That to appear to be humble, when this is done inopportunely or excessively, is not beneficial, but harmful; how we ought to act towards those who praise us, and that praise does no harm at all to one who is attentive.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

A brother visited Abba Serapion. The Elder invited him to offer a prayer, according to custom; but he did not obey, calling himself a sinner and unworthy of the monastic *schema*. The Elder also wanted to wash his feet, but the brother did not consent to it, using the same words (that is, "I am a sinner and unworthy of the monastic *schema*"). The Elder then set the table and proposed that they sit down to eat. He sat down with the Elder and began to eat with him. During the meal, the Elder admonished him and said: "My son, if you want to be edified, stay patiently in your cell and pay attention to yourself and to your handiwork; for going out and visiting others does not profit you as much as staying in your cell."

When the brother heard the Elder saying these things, he was chagrined, and the expression on his face altered so much that the Elder could not fail to notice it. Therefore, Abba Serapion said to him: "Up to now you have been saying 'I am a sinner,' censuring yourself, and judging yourself unworthy even to live; and yet, when I counselled you lovingly, you became as angry as a wild beast. If you want to be humble, then, learn to accept courageously whatever others say to you, and do not just speak fine words that have no content."

On hearing this, the brother made a prostration to the Elder and went away, greatly edified.

B. From St. Barsanouphios

A brother asked an Elder: "What should one do if he wishes to quiet the reputation that he has acquired, lest he be harmed by what is said about him? For as the Fathers said, 'Woe to him whose name is greater than his deeds.'"

The Elder replied to him: "Having a name or a reputation greater than one's accomplishments does a man no harm at all, as long as he feels no gratification from words of praise and does not agree with what is said about him, just as one who is slandered as a murderer is not accounted guilty in the sight of God as long as he has not committed such a murder. A man who is praised should reflect thus: 'Men have held me in esteem, but only because they do not know what I am.'"

Hypothesis XLIX

Concerning how one should use clothing, what kind, and up to what point, in order to cover the body, and how the Fathers loved frugality in their very dress; the faithful should prefer frugality in every circumstance.

A. From the Life of St. John the Merciful

Who could adequately recount the frugal lifestyle of John the Patriarch: the poverty of his clothing and the modesty of his bedding? For along with his other virtues, he did not neglect this one either—to the end that he was no better off, in these respects, than the masses of insignificant men. Once, a certain resident of the city, and an acquaintance of his, on learning what sort of state he was in, purchased a fur coat worth thirty-six *nomismata* [the "*nomisma*"—plural, "*nomismata*"—was a pure gold coin weighing about 4.5 grams and a basic unit in the Byzantine monetary system—*Trans.*] and sent it to the Blessed Patriarch, with the fervent plea that he not reject this gift, but wear it.

The holy Patriarch agreed to do this favor, both on account of the trustworthiness of the man who made this request of him and because the man pleaded fervently and insistently. Now, when those who were close to him learned of this (and subsequently related it), he did not cease to disparage himself night and day. "Who would not accuse me, the humble John," he kept saying, "when I am clad in a garment worth thirty-six *nomismata*, while my brothers in Christ are freezing from the cold and suffering hardship in the open air, and when they cannot procure even a small, cheap rag? The majority of them go to bed, alas, with empty stomachs, longing, like the pauper Lazarus, to feed off the crumbs that fall from my table [*cf.* St. Luke 16:21].

"Oh, my! How many strangers and sojourners arrive in this city, not having anywhere to lay their heads; hungry and thirsty, they lie outstretched in the middle of the marketplace, while I receive goods of every kind. And aside from the other comforts that I enjoy, I am now clad in this costly garment. What, therefore, can I expect to hear on that day (of the Second Coming)? What, other than: 'Thou in thy lifetime re-

ceivedst thy good things, and the poor evil things; but now they are comforted, and thou art tormented' [*cf.* St. Luke 16:25]? But blessed be the Lord, humble John will no longer be covered with this expensive garment, but the poor will be clothed through its monetary value."

At daybreak, he sent the coat to be sold in the market. When the donor saw it, he purchased it again and took it to Patriarch John. The Patriarch accepted it, but immediately sent it back to be sold in the market. When this happened twice, and many more times, the great John declared to the one who offered it: "Let us see which of us two will tire first: I who sell it, or you who buy it and offer it back." For this man was from among the very wealthy, and it was for this reason that the great John deliberately said these things, since he wanted to take money from the man and divert it to the poor.

B. From the Life of St. Arsenios

The great Arsenios so loathed the things of this world, considering them to be of no significance whatever, that he could not bear at all to look upon anything worldly. Therefore, out of opposition and antipathy towards the splendid raiment of his former life, which he wore when he was living in the palace, he used such cheap and worthless garments that he did not differ at all from a poor peasant who wears torn and rotten clothing. But St. Arsenios was very pleased by these poor garments, which were fit to be thrown away, and took pride in them, since he was more concerned about his inner life and wanted to adorn his soul rather than his body.

C. From the *Gerontikon*

A brother asked an Elder: "Is it good to have two tunics?" "Keep two tunics," replied the Elder, "and do not acquire evil, which stains the body and soul. The soul has no need of evil, but the body does need covering. If we have what is indispensable and necessary, let us be content with that, as the Apostle says [*cf.* I St. Timothy 6:8]."

D. From Abba Isaiah

Take care that you do not allow your body to become unsightly from filth, lest you be overcome by vainglory; but if you are young, let it be completely unsightly, for this is to your benefit. Do not desire anything

belonging to your neighbor when you see it, whether it be a garment, a belt, or a monastic hat, and do not satisfy your desire by making something like it for yourself. Indeed, even if you own a book, do not embellish or adorn it, for this, too, can become a passion for you. The adornment of the body is the destruction of the soul; however to look after these matters with the fear of God is a good thing.

E. From Abba Isaac

Love the poor garments in your possession, so that you may annihilate the desires that grow in you, such as haughtiness; for he who loves elegance cannot acquire humble thoughts, since the heart mirrors what is visible on the outside.

F. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Isaac said to the brethren: "Our Fathers and Abba Pambo used to wear much-patched old garments made of palm fibers; you now wear costly clothing. Get away from here, you have ruined this place." When he was about to go to the harvest, he said to them: "I am no longer giving you instructions, since you do not keep them."

2. The same Elder said: "Abba Pambo used to say that a monk should wear a garment of such a kind that if he were to throw it out of his cell and leave it for three days, nobody would take it, on account of its shabbiness."

G. From St. Ephraim

He who adorns himself in fine raiment harms his soul; for extravagance in clothing brings disgrace to the soul of a monk, since it produces pride in the soul. Frugality in clothing is what benefits and commends a monk. Be concerned, O monk, with inner labor, and do not decorate walls, which are of no help to you; for a beautiful cell does not endow a monk with patience. Let us seek what is absolutely necessary; superfluous things that cause us distraction are harmful and pernicious.

Hypothesis L

That we should not do anything to gratify ourselves or do anything out of a passionate craving.

A. From the Life of St. Pachomios

St. Pachomios the Great built a Church in one of his monasteries, and around it he erected a portico with beautiful pillars and bricks. When he had completed it, he was pleased by the work that he had constructed so beautifully. Reflecting, however, that he ought not to marvel at the works of his hands or to take delight in the artistry of things that he himself had made, he—while the building was still new—took ropes, bound the pillars with them, and ordered the brothers to pull them with all their might, until the pillars became bent and unsightly. Thereupon, he began to speak, and said: "You, too, my brethren, should not labor to embellish the works of your hands overmuch; but it is preferable for you to pray that, by the Grace of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, your works will remain impregnable (to ambition or vainglory) and that your mind may not falter through praise for your skill and become a prey to the Devil. For many are the wiles of the Devil."

B. From St. Barsanouphios

A brother asked an Elder: "If an object comes my way and I use it in my service as the monastery Steward, but I notice that I am forming an attachment to it, is it perhaps a passion for me, when I take it to use it?"

The Elder replied: "If you use this object and you undergo warfare from the thought of attachment to it, say to the thought: 'I need this object in order to fulfill my obedience; why, therefore, are you trying to instill in me the desire to take it?' And if the passion ceases to act in you, take the object; but if it does not stop, then, if the needs of the task can easily be satisfied by means of another implement, do your work with the other object and fight against your passion. If, however, this is not possible, then use this object and reproach yourself: 'If it were not necessary,' you should say, 'I would not have to take it, because I am overcome by my attachment to it.'"

The brother then asked: "If someone offers me something which I need, and I see that my heart has a passionate desire to accept it, what should I do? Should I take it with pleasure, since I need it? Or should I decline it, on account of my attachment to it?"

The Elder answered: "You should have the same attitude towards this that you have towards food. You know that we need daily nourishment, and that we are prevented from taking it for mere pleasure; but if we receive our vital sustenance, thanking God, Who has given it to us, and we condemn ourselves as unworthy of this gift, then God blesses and sanctifies it. Hence, if you need something and all goes well, thank God, Who follows your work, and condemn yourself as unworthy; then God will banish the feeling of attachment from you, for with God all things are possible. If, however, you are not going to use this object for your needs, then do not accept it, for it will be an occasion of covetousness."

END OF THE FIRST BOOK OF *THE EVERGETINOS*
AND TO GOD THE GLORY
❄ AMEN ❄

Glossary of General Terms in Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Christianity*

Abba: Aramaic word for "Father," used as a title for monks and other clergy.

Abbess: The spiritual Mother of a convent. (See "Spiritual Mother.")

Abbot: The spiritual Father of a monastery (often a simple monk). (See "Spiritual Father.")

Amma: Feminine form of "Abba," or "Mother," used as a title for nuns.

Anchorite: A monastic living in solitude and isolation from other monastics.

Archbishop: Bishop of a large or important diocese with the distinction of being an Archdiocese; a Bishop with this honorary title. (See "Bishop.")

Archimandrite: The highest rank below that of Bishop, given to a Hieromonk. (See "Hieromonk.")

Bishop: The head of a diocese or local Church. In the Christian East, all Bishops, regardless of rank or administrative authority, are considered equal in doctrinal authority. They may not be married at the time of their Consecrations. In ascending administrative rank, episcopal titles are: Bishop, Archbishop, Metropolitan, and Patriarch. In the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Patriarch of Constantinople holds the title of "Œcumenical Patriarch," or "*Primus inter Pares*" (the first among equals). (See "Priest.")

Brother: A term for monastics in general; in Eastern Christian tradition, the term is used for novices and by monks and Bishops in addressing one another privately. Formally, unlike in the West, all monks in the East are called "Father," following their Tonsure. (See "Tonsure.")

***Cœnobion*:** A monastic community in which monks or nuns live in a common compound, take meals together, and worship in common. They also hold all things in common and are governed by an Abbot or Abbess or a similar superior.

Cœnobite: One who lives in a *cœnobion*.

Commune: To partake of the Eucharist. In modern Eastern Christian practice, the Eucharist is administered from the Bread and Wine (Body and Blood), which are intermingled in the Chalice, with a liturgical spoon.

Confession: The Mystery of confessing one's sins to a Priest, followed by a prayer of forgiveness or absolution. Also, the sharing of sins or spiritual concerns with

an Elder or spiritual advisor, including spiritual Fathers and spiritual Mothers, though without the bestowal of the formal prayers of absolution.

Convent: A community of nuns. (See "*Cœnobion*" and "Skete.")

Council: A gathering of Bishops from one or more of the local Orthodox Churches for the purpose of making administrative decisions or examining doctrinal matters. Councils of this kind are often called "Pan-Orthodox Councils." Their decisions are considered binding and valid only when they are in concord with the decisions of the Œcumenical Synods and the traditional doctrines of the Orthodox Church. Councils are sometimes referred to as "Synods." (See "Œcumenical Synod.")

Deacon: See "Priest."

Desert: Any isolated wilderness area; the sense of isolation cultivated by monastic men or women, regardless of their geographical location.

Desert Fathers: An inclusive term for male and female monastics (sometimes called Desert Mothers), usually in reference to the Egyptian desert and the Abbas and Ammas who lived there. (See "Sketis.") The term can be more generally applied to monastics living in any isolated area.

Eastern Christianity: Those Christians not belonging to the Christian communities of the West; i.e., who are neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant. Historically, they trace their roots to the earliest Christian communities in the Holy Land and North Africa. The majority of Eastern Christians identify themselves as Eastern Orthodox Christians, who accept the decisions of the Œcumenical Synod of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) and maintain ties to the Patriarch of Constantinople. The members of the various non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches, who reject the decisions of that Synod, are often called "Oriental Orthodox" Christians (which includes the Coptic Orthodox).

Elder (Gr., *Geron* or *Gerontas*): A monastic of wide spiritual experience or notable spiritual gifts who offers spiritual advice and guidance to other monastics. Often imprecisely translated as "old man."

Eldress: A female Elder.

Eucharist: The Body and Blood of Christ, imparted at the Divine Liturgy and in reserved form to the ill and those distant from a Church.

Fasting: Refraining from any food or drink, in some cases, or, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, as well as Lenten periods before Pascha (the proper Eastern Christian term for Easter), the Nativity Feast (Christmas), and other Great Feasts, from meat and dairy products and, in most instances, from fish, wine, and oil, too. Though Eastern Christian monastics are normally vegetarians and refrain from eating meat at any time, their fasting practices are also followed by the lay faithful, except for the Monday fast, which is primarily

monastic.

Gathering (*Synaxis*): A meeting in which monastics and monastic Elders gather for spiritual instructions or discussions. Also often used to refer to common Church services, including the Divine Liturgy.

Hesychasm: Derived from the Greek word for "silence," the word "Hesychasm" refers to an ancient form of inner prayer, practiced widely by the desert Fathers. It centers particularly on the recitation of the "Jesus Prayer" ("Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner," in its most common form), in conjunction with concentration on the heart (hence, the "Jesus Prayer" is also called the "Prayer of the Heart") and certain ascetic and physical disciplines, as well as the control of breathing, whereby one comes, through the purification of the senses, to a vision of Divine light, or the uncreated Energies of God. This inner cleansing and consequent transformation, in which the mind and the heart find union in Grace, lead to man's deification (*theosis*)—even, to some extent, in this life—by union with the Energies of God (though not with His Essence, which remains ineffable, unfathomable, and beyond man's ken). Enlightenment and divinization in Christ are the ultimate aims of Hesychasm and define, for the Orthodox Christian, human salvation. The writings in *The Evergetinos* describe the struggle for *theosis* in the ancient desert. Hesychastic principles and teachings are also found in the writings of St. Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrios of Pontos, St. Diadochos of Photike, St. Maximos the Confessor, St. Symeon the New Theologian, St. Gregory of Sinai, and St. Nicephoros of Mt. Athos, and those of many other Church Fathers. St. Gregory Palamas, in the fourteenth century, is credited with setting forth this ancient tradition in its fullest form in his lofty apologetic discourses. A collection of writings on Hesychasm—a companion volume, of sorts, to *The Evergetinos*—was compiled by St. Makarios of Corinth and St. Nikodemos and published in Venice, in 1782, as *The Philokalia*. An English translation of this classic of Orthodox spirituality is still in progress; four of the five volumes of the work have been published to date.

Hesychast: One who practices Hesychasm. (See "Hesychasm.")

Hesychasterion: A hermitage or a monastic institution dedicated to the practice of Hesychasm. (See "Hesychasm.")

Hierarch: A Bishop of any rank.

Hierodeacon, Hieromonk: A monastic Deacon or Presbyter, respectively. (See "Priest.")

Liturgy: In Eastern Christianity, the Eucharistic service; usually, "Divine Liturgy." Often wrongly called the "Mass," a term unknown in Eastern Christian tradition.

Metropolitan: The Bishop of a very large or important diocese with the dis-

tinction of being a Metropolia; a Bishop with this honorary title (usually the President, or chief Hierarch, of a Synod of Bishops). (See "Bishop.")

Monastery: A community of monks. (See "*Cœnobion*" and "Skete.")

Mystery (*Mysterion*): The proper term, in Eastern Christian nomenclature, for a "Sacrament." While the latter term is used widely by English-speaking Orthodox, it conveys what in Western Christianity is a concept less broad and encompassing than that designated by the word "Mystery." In Eastern Christianity, almost any act which conveys Grace is considered a Mystery, without specifying seven particular "Sacraments" (though this idea was imported into Eastern Christianity from the West, both by imitation and in responding to Western Christian theological thought). Nor, in the East, is a distinction made, as in the West, between the acts and ordinances established by Christ Himself and so-called *sacramentalia*, or Grace that is bestowed *ex opere operato* and Grace bestowed *quasi ex opere operato*.

Novice: One who is being tested for the monastic Tonsure, normally for a period of three years. (See "Tonsure.")

Œcumenical Synod: A gathering of the Bishops of all of the local and national Orthodox Churches for the purpose of making administrative decisions or defending traditional Orthodox doctrine. The decisions of such Synods, when accepted by the entire Church (seven, and sometimes eight, Synods are considered œcumenical in the Eastern Orthodox Church), are absolutely binding on the Church. All subsequent Councils and Synods must conform to the doctrinal statements of the Œcumenical Synods, which are sometimes referred to as "Œcumenical Councils." (See "Council.")

Orthodox Christianity: See "Eastern Christianity."

Patriarch: Bishop of a local, national, or regional Church of great historical importance or extensive geographical territory. The Western term "Pope" is synonymous with "Patriarch." (See "Bishop.")

Priest: A clergyman ordained by a Bishop to serve a monastic community or a parish. The members of the Priesthood are, in ascending rank, Deacon, Presbyter, and Bishop. All three ranks belong to the Priesthood, though the Presbyter is most often referred to singly by the term "Priest." In the Eastern Church, Deacons and Presbyters may be married or unmarried, though all Bishops are celibate. There are also lower ranks of clergy that are often associated with the Priesthood, including Subdeacons and Readers (Chanters). (See "Bishop" and "Hierodeacon, Hieromonk.")

Schema: This term, from the Greek word for "form," "plan," or "design," is used in the early centuries of monasticism to describe the monastic habit in general (*schema*). There is also a specific garment, the *Analabos*, often called the "*Schema*" or the "Great *Schema*," which is worn by Eastern Christian monastics of the

highest grade, who are called "Schema-monks" or "Schema-nuns." (There are three monastic grades: that of Rasophore, that of the Small *Schema*, and that of the Great *Schema*, though, according to some authorities, monastics of the Small *Schema* and the Great *Schema* properly belong to a single rank.) The *Schema* is draped over the shoulders, hanging down the back, just below the neck, and down the front of the body, as well. It is emblazoned, on the front, with a Cross, the instruments of the Crucifixion, and various letters that refer to Christ and the spiritual powers available to the monk or nun in his or her spiritual struggles. The front part of the Great *Schema* covers the torso, while the front portion of the Small *Schema* is much shorter and covers the thorax.

Skete: A small community of monastic hermits, normally comprised of private hermitages (huts or cells) and a Church or Chapel for common worship.

Sketis (Wadi el Natrun, Wadi el-Natrun, Wadi al Natrun, Wadi al-Natrun): A valley in the southern part of the Nitrian Desert in Egypt, to the west of the mouths of the Nile River. In the fourth and fifth centuries, especially, but even as late as the seventh century, hundreds of monasteries flourished in Sketis. The name comes from the Greek for "ascetic" and refers to the immense number of ascetic monastics (hundreds of thousands, according to some authorities) who inhabited the area. The term is often loosely, if somewhat inaccurately, used to refer inclusively to what were actually distinct and specific monastic communities in the Nitrian Desert. With the Moslem conquest of Egypt in 641 A.D., the monastic communities of Sketis were destroyed. (See "Skete.")

Spiritual Father: In the case of a Priest, a Confessor; in the case of a monk, a spiritual advisor. (See "Confession.")

Spiritual Mother: A nun who is a spiritual advisor. (See "Confession.")

Superior: An Abbot or Abbess or someone in charge of a monastic community or a ranking clergyman in a parish.

Synod: A term often used to refer to a formal meeting of the Hierarchs of a Synod of Bishops.

Synod of Bishops: In the Eastern Church, a council of Bishops who administer a local or national Church body, the senior member of which acts as its President; the basic organ of administrative conciliarity in the Eastern Church.

Tonsure: The cutting of the hair, by which a novice is formally accepted into monastic ranks. This monastic custom developed in the fourth century and was, contrary to the claims of some authorities, not universally followed in the Egyptian desert, where acceptance into the monastic estate was often very informal.

* This list is not meant to be exhaustive. It essays simply to give the reader some familiarity with Eastern Christian nomenclature, which is often inconsistent and influenced by extraneous traditions. We have also avoided, here, reiterating definitions found in the text or in endnotes, except when further elaboration seemed appropriate.

Index of Selected Names in Book I

Agathon, St., 39, 196, 255

Alonios, St., 12, 199, 370, 391, 393

Alypios the Stylite, St., 99-103, 261-262

Ammonas, St., 369, 382-383, 386

Amphilochios, St., Bishop of Iconium, 8-15

Anoub, St., 124, 369-370, 374, 391-392

Anthony the Great, St., 37, 74, 85-86, 130-131, 136, 144, 160, 188, 218-220, 255, 319-320, 343, 386, 402-403, 409

Antiochos St., (author of the *Pandects*), 190-191, 211, 309, 372

Arcadios, Emperor, 319

Arsenios the Great, St., 32-33, 40-41, 196, 199, 287-288, 319, 326, 386, 417

Barsanouphios the Great, St., 130, 166-167, 175-182, 185, 203-204, 205-206, 307-308, 328-330, 361-363, 365-366, 414-415, 419-420

Basil the Great, St., 304-305

Benedict of Nursia, St., xxviii, 79-82, 124-125, 296-297

Clement the Martyr, St., Bishop of Ancyra, 96-99

Constantine the Great, St., 84, 319

Daniel of Sketis, St., 32-33, 188, 326, 386-387

Daniel the Stylite, St., 62-63

Diadochos, St., Bishop of Photike, 109-110, 146-147, 203, 237-238, 377, 406-407, 423

Ephraim the Syrian, St., 17, 28-29, 41-42, 48-50, 71-72, 114, 140, 148-149, 163, 171-172, 189-190, 195, 196-198, 205, 208-210, 212, 222-225, 230-232, 233-234, 244, 247-249, 252-254, 264-265, 268-271, 279-280, 293-295, 306-307, 313-314, 316-317, 331-332, 341-348, 354-355, 371-372, 403-404, 412-413, 418

Epiphanios, St., Bishop of Cyprus, 384, 399-400

Evagrios of Pontos, Abba, 44, 116, 388, 423

Evthymios the Great, St., 91, 301-303, 334-336

Forty Holy Martyrs (of Sebaste), 104-105

Gregory the Dialogist (the Great), St., Pope of Rome, 53-61, 64-68, 79-82, 90-91, 93-94, 124-125, 186-188, 281-282, 296-297, 301, 322-324

Gregory the Wonderworker, St., Bishop of Neo-Cæsarea, 324-326, 332

Honorios (Honorius), Emperor, 319, 332

Hyperechios, St., 48, 145, 396

Ioannikios the Great, St., 126-128, 261

Isaac the Syrian, St., 29, 30-34, 91-93, 110, 139, 140-141, 163-164, 191-192, 198, 238-242, 244-245, 249-250, 275-276, 364-365, 407, 418

Isaiah, St., 17-20, 42-43, 50-51, 87-88, 108-109, 123, 144, 172, 191, 198, 201-203, 237, 259, 265, 271, 307, 356-359, 372-374, 377, 385, 404-405, 417-418

John Cassian, St., 135-136, 147, 164-166, 172-175, 225-228, 256-258, 273-275, 289, 360-361

John the Almsgiver (the Merciful), St., Patriarch of Alexandria, 37-39, 416-417

John the Short, St., 13-15, 135, 188, 207, 251, 288, 369, 389

Joseph of Panephysis, St., 237

Kronios, St., 204-205, 217, 396

Longinos, St., 106, 384, 390

Lot, St., 182-183, 237

Makarios of Corinth, St., xx-xxi, xxiv, xxvi, 423

Makarios the Egyptian, St., 82-83, 161-163, 192-194, 207, 320-321, 342-343, 396, 401-402

Mark the Ascetic, St., 20, 30, 137-139, 146, 149, 191, 203, 211, 237, 272-273, 310, 359, 374, 377, 405-406

Matoes, St., 390-391

Maximos the Confessor, St., xxxiii, 51, 139, 147-148, 250, 258-259, 276-277, 310, 348-352, 407, 423

Melania the Younger (the Roman), St., 217

Moses the Ethiopian, St., 4-5, 12-13, 144, 160-161, 243, 256, 387-388

Nikodemos the Hagiorite, St., xx-xxii, xxiv, xxvi, xxxi-xxxvi, 423

Nisthero, St., 292

Or, St., 306

Pachomios the Great, St., 74-76, 116-118, 126, 213-214, 221-222, 282, 303-304, 317-

319, 379-382, 419

Palladios, xxiv, 1-2, 4-5, 116, 150-151, 186, 217-222, 229-230, 333-334

Pambo, St., 144-145, 255, 389, 390, 401, 418

Paphnoutios, St., 21, 136-137

Peter the Apostle, St., 6, 10, 54, 166, 181, 304, 313, 357-358, 382, 408, 412-413

Pior, St., 116

Poimen, St., 5-6, 13, 28, 112, 122-124, 136, 144, 146, 160-161, 182-183, 194, 201, 205, 207, 237, 251, 255, 292, 369-370, 374-375, 386-388, 390-393, 409

Savvas the Sanctified, St., 61-62, 152-157

Silouan, St., 84, 122, 170, 305

Sisoes, St., 6, 63, 107, 255, 289, 306, 327-328, 393-397, 408

Symeon the Stylite (of the *Mandra*), St., 118-119, 367-369

Synkletike, St., 2-3, 47-48, 235, 255, 267-268, 336-337, 382

Theodora of Alexandria, St., 214-217, 298-299, 337-340

Theodore of Pherme, St., 33, 207, 356, 364, 388

Theodore the Sanctified, St., 117-118, 126, 303-304, 317-319, 381

Theodosios the Cœnobiarch, St., 142-144, 156-157, 297-298

Theophilos, Archbishop of Alexandria, 88-89, 388-389, 407

Thomas the Apostle, St., 68-71

Zosimas, St., 242, 409-411

Index of Selected Subjects in Book I

Children, struggling in martyrdom or ascesis, 95-105

Company,
- bad, avoidance of, 186-195, 196-198
- good, cultivation of, 134-141

Compulsion of oneself, 235-245

Confession of thoughts, 150-168, 169-185

Contentiousness, 367-375

Counsel, importance of seeking from others, 134-141

Death,
- experiences after, 64-73
- remembrance of, 37-46

Demons, temptations from, 246-254

Despair, 1-27

Disobedience, 309-310

Divine Providence, 376-378

Elders,
- avoidance of condemnation of, 311-315
- importance of visiting, 134-141

Endurance, 235-245

Evil, ease of, 207-212

False Humility, 414-415

Frugality of clothing, 416-418

Future Judgment, remembrance of, 37-46

God,
- fear of, 115
- love of, 115

Grumbling, 309-310

Heaven, Kingdom of, 47-51

Hell, torments of, 64-73

Honor, avoidance of, 412-413

Humility, 379-385, 386-408

Learning from others, 316-321

Monastic aspirants, testing of, 213-228, 229-234

Monastic life, must be in conformity with schema, 267-280

Negligence, 235-245, 246-254

Obedience, 142-149, 296-300, 301-308

Parents, proper attitude of pious children toward, 95-105

Poverty, monastic (voluntary), 130-133

Praise, 414-415

Procrastination, 28-29

Relatives, proper attitude of monastics toward, 116-125, 126-129

Renunciation of the world, 106-114

Repentance, 1-27, 28-29, 30-34, 35-36,

Saints, glory of (in Heaven), 47-51

Schema (habit), 261-266, 267-280

Self-abasement, 386-408

Self-gratification, 419-420

Self-reliance, danger of, 150-168, 322-332

Self-reproach, 409-411

Simplicity, 301-308

Solitude, danger of for those unprepared, 356-366

Soul,
- departure of from the body, 53-63
- destination of after death, 74-84, 90-94
- existence of outside the body, 74-84
- testing of by demons after death, 85-89

Spiritual Fathers, obedience to counsels of, 281-295

Stability, monastic, 333-355

Superiors, obedience to, 296-300, 301-308

Teachers, obedience to, 311-315

Virtue, difficulty of, 207-212, 235-245

Warfare, spiritual, 246-254, 255-260

Will, cutting off of one's, 301-308

Will of God, 376-378

Worldly affairs, estrangement from, 186-195, 199-206